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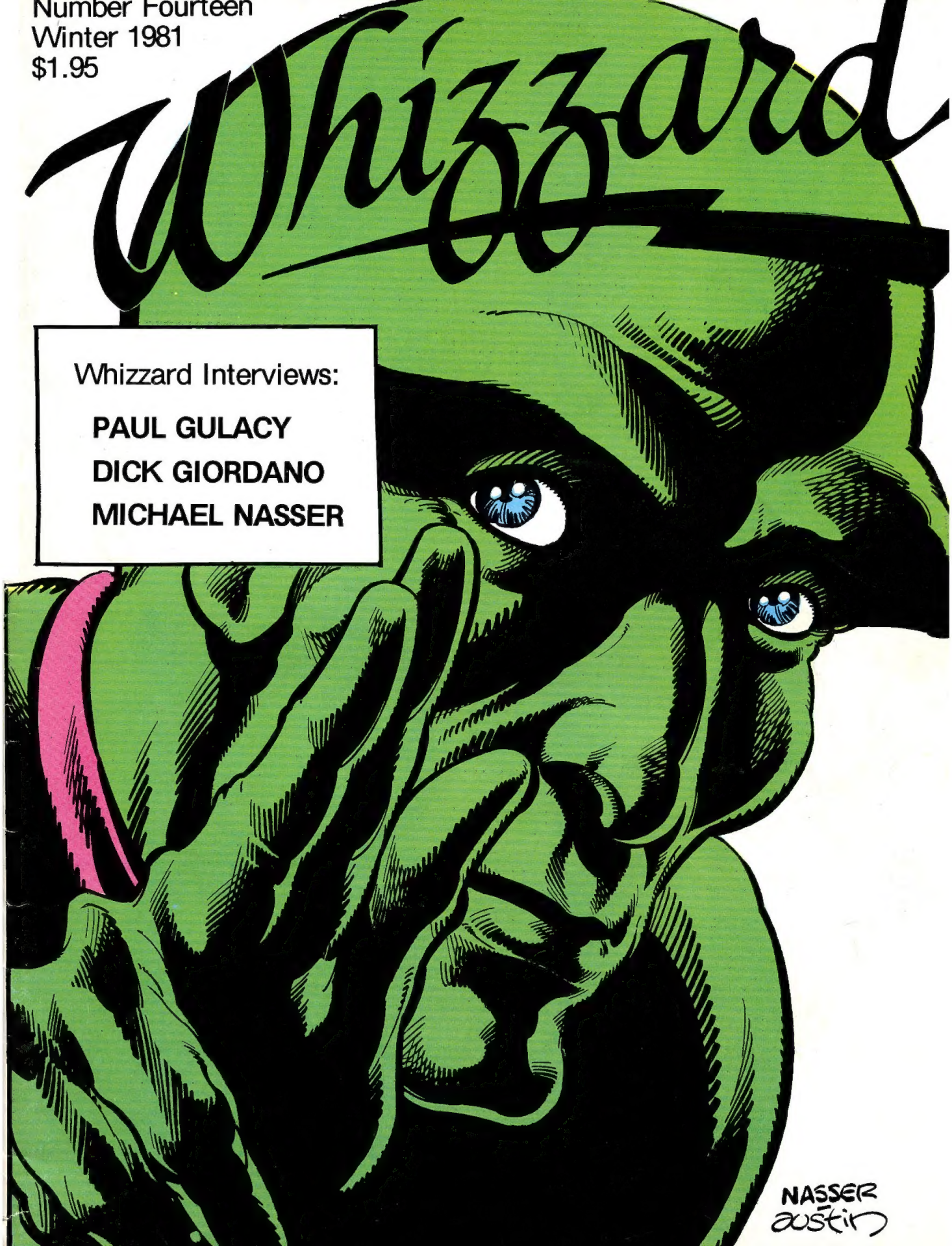
Whizzard

Whizzard Interviews:

PAUL GULACY
DICK GIORDANO
MICHAEL NASSER



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WHIZZARD

WINTER 1981

EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Marty Klug
ASSISTANT EDITORS
Kenn Thomas
J.Durrwachter

Small Talk...

What the comics industry really needs is another world war. Massive death and destruction, despite some slight sacrifices in other areas, could infuse an explosive renaissance of latent creative talent and economic potential throughout the medium.

Admittedly, nuclear holocaust has gotten a bad reputation over the years. It kills people. It wastes resources. It hurts the tourist trade. But there's nothing like massive human misery to increase the demand for escapism—for a fantasy world were the biggest problem of never-failing superheroes is explaining their costumes to the dry cleaners. Such tales, with few exceptions, have been the mainstay of comics storytelling for over four decades.

There'd be no real competition for comics. Who is going to go out to the theater or bookstore when SS-18s are plopping in their garden? Surely television drama will be constantly interrupted with Charmin commercials and government bulletins on preventing the End of Civilization As We Know It (perhaps even narrated by Gary Coleman). Subscription comics—with their unique, collectable crease—will reach their heyday and make folded books the fashion from coast to coast.

Not only would there by an increased demand for the subject matter (and an increased younger readership due to an inevitable Baby Boom) but there would be an increased demand for more innovative work. Consider the historical precedents. When 320,000 Americans were being killed or wounded in Southeast Asia to save the world from Communism some of the most exciting contemporary talents were emerging on the comics front. Jim Steranko, Barry Smith, Terry Austin, Steve Englehart, Craig Russell and Steve Gerber appeared—just to name a few. Back in the early 60's when defense advisors were being sent away with their Saigon street maps Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko created what is generally regarded as some of their finest work. Bill Gaines' "Entertaining Comics," produced during the peak of the 50's Cold War, are

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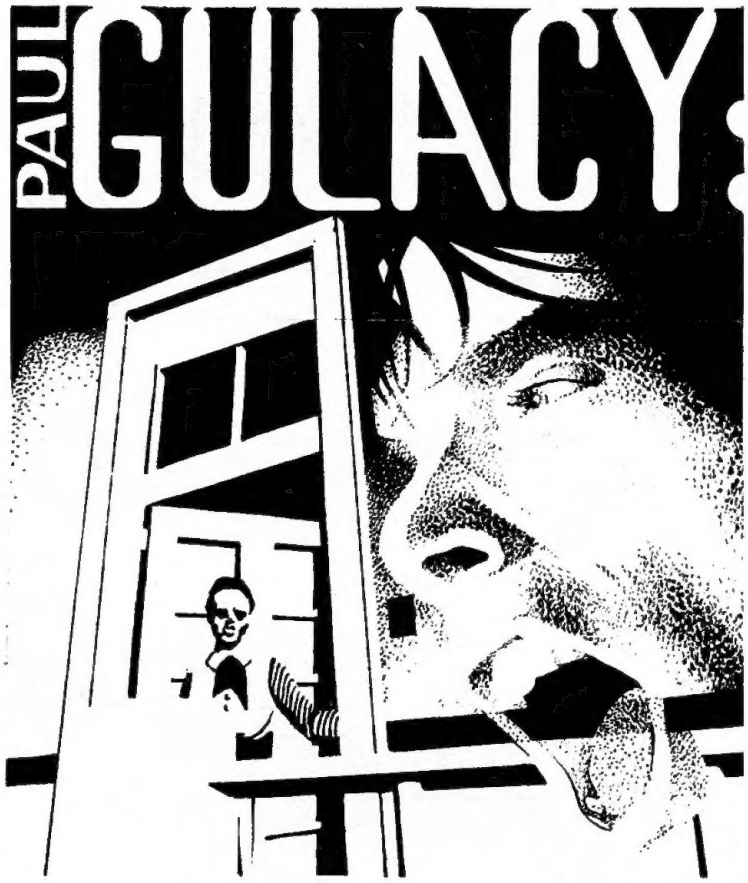
PAUL GULACY



Paul Gulacy, at 27, is widely acclaimed for his powerful, cinematic storytelling. Although best known for Marvel Comics' Master of Kung Fu *and Eclipse Enterprises'* Sabre, *his work has ranged from Spiro Agnew t-shirts and Rawhide Kid drawings to Honey Hooker.*

Since performing in a barbershop quartet when he was 12, he has worked profesionally as a drummer and also masters 81 impersonations.

"Blood on Black Satin," his favoirte comics story, was recently published by Warren. His work will soon be appearing in Epic Illustrated *and* Marvel Preview.

Currently, in his New Jersey studio, he is storyboarding films and painting covers.

The following telephone interview was conducted by Jerry Durrwachter on Sept. 8, 1980. The Paul Gulacy index was compiled by Jerry Durrwachter with assistance from Paul Gulacy, Gary Johannigmeier, and the B&R Comix Center.

BEYOND THE SHADOW OF SHANG-CHI?

WHIZZARD: How did your work for *Hustler* come about?

GULACY: The editor and the art director were into comics and they approached Jim [Steranko] at a convention to do something for their October [1977] issue. Steranko was busy so he gave me a call and asked me if I wanted to do this work. I said, "Sure, why not?" I needed the money at the time.

It started out with a double-page illustration. At that time, I was just beginning to paint and I was curious to see how my work would look reproduced. I took it on. Next, I did an ad for a projector—a hand-held projector that you can watch blue movies through. Initially it was sent to Continuity [Associates]. Al Weiss had done the original illustration and they didn't like it so they handed it to me and said, "Take over." The third drawing was the cover of *Honey Hooker*. I seemed to go from bad to worse (laughter).

They offered me the "Honey Hooker" strip, which is just a parody of "Little Annie Fanny," for $500 a week. I said, "No, I don't want to touch it at this point." Then they called back two or three days later and said, "We'll give you $600." I said, "No way. I'm not interested." The final phonecall it was up to $700. They said, "We can't go any higher, this is our final figure." I still turned it down. I didn't want it.

WHIZZARD: Have you ever considered working for *Playboy*?

GULACY: I think with *Playboy*, they contact you.

Doug Moench [pronounced Mench] and I are planning to put together a one page cartoon. Doug had worked at the *Sun Times* in Chicago with a lot of the guys who are now in the editorial department at *Playboy*. He did send me a bunch of jokes about three years ago. They were just terrible. They weren't funny, and I told him. He didn't like it (laughter). That's the way Doug and I get along.

We're still shuffling ideas around. We'll start at the top and if *Playboy* doesn't like it we'll go to *Oui* and probably eventually end up sending it to *Hustler*. Then they'll end up rejecting us (laughter).

WHIZZARD: Would you be interested in doing a humorous strip?

GULACY: Yes, I do like the humor aspect. I like to let loose once in awhile.

Not long ago I offered a strip to *Epic* [*Illustrated*], to Archie [Goodwin], and explained the joke and it didn't get a smile out of him. It kind of ended right there. It was intended to be in color and they're not buying color material right now. They're not buying a lot of material because they have a big backlog of unprinted things.

WHIZZARD: Will you be doing any more work for *Epic*?

GULACY: I had started a second story with Doug, a black and white job, but I got halfway through with it and quit. I'm like that. I get into these weird moods and it strikes me that I cannot do a particular thing. Something clicks and tells me, "Don't do this stuff." So I listened to myself and said, "You're right, I shouldn't do this anymore."

However, I have another story in mind for *Epic*. I'll be adapting a turn of the century poem and put a science fiction theme to it. It's called "The Listeners," written by Walter De LaMare. It's a timeless piece. I just read it and said, "Hey, I gotta do this."

WHIZZARD: Have you been satisfied with the reproduction of your work in *Epic*?

GULACY: The cover does not look like the painting. They left the black plate out, which means all the dark values have been diminished. They're not there. It still came out nice, but a little different from what I expected.

WHIZZARD: How did you feel following the work of Frank Frazetta and Richard Corben?

GULACY: (laughter) When Archie asked me to do the painting I said, "I can't follow Frazetta and Corben." He said, "give it a shot." So I did. I wasn't happy with the initial concept.

I had some personal problems at the time, I was very depressed, and I had a hell of a time coming up with an idea. After submitting three sketches, three rough drawings, Archie went with the alien girl.

WHIZZARD: Is orange your favorite color?

GULACY: I do seem to drift toward orange. I just like those monochromatic values. I feel if an artist is painting he must know one color as well as 30 or 40 colors. It's just as difficult working with one color.

I don't know why I choose orange. It worked for that painting. I wanted a very warm color. When you think in terms of a parched desert landscape you think of oranges and yellows. I went with that.

WHIZZARD: How much painting work have you done? It said in *Master of Kung Fu* 51 that you were leaving the book to do painting.

GULACY: I did. The first year after I left *Master of Kung Fu* I took the entire year off. I felt I needed the vacation. I wanted to get the dust blown off and push myself away from the drawing table. Every other day I played tennis and then I started picking up the paint brush.

I had painted before I entered the comics field but I didn't have a very educated approach. If someone young is painting a picture or composing music they do it by ear and by what they see by instinct. They don't know why they chose that chord or that color, but instinctively they know it should be that way. That's more or less where I was with painting.

When you figure out why, it becomes very difficult. You're involved in a learning process.

I did a few commission paintings for churches, religious paintings.

Then I started working on some paperback samples. I wanted the challenge. Even before entering comics I had the inclination of entering that field. So I did. I worked up a dozen paintings—detective, western, and gothic—and took them out to different publishing companies. I sold one to a small outfit called Belmont Tower Productions.

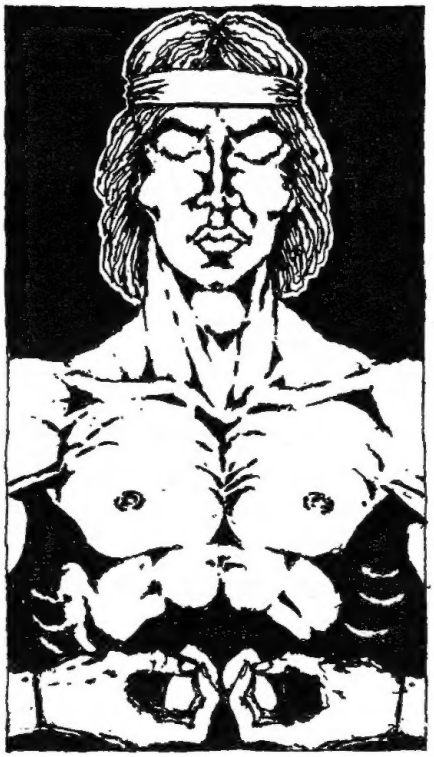
WHIZZARD: Did they have plans to publish it?

GULACY: No, because they switched art directors. The art director who hired me to do some things had left and when the other art director came in he brought his own artists. He wasn't terribly fond of my work so I had trouble getting work from him.

WHIZZARD: Do you have any plans to work for paperback publishers in the near future?

GULACY: I've lost total interest in paperbacks. The reason is because I find that I'm given work that I really don't want to do. I don't want to paint something I don't want to, just to paint and have my name on the cover.

The other aspect is the fact that if you do a large painting it's reduced down to



two or three inches. It's not worth getting the ulcer.

Another reason is they pay on publication, which can range from three weeks to six months before you're paid. I just found that discouraging.

I'm making more money doing covers for Marvel than I would be doing paperback work.

WHIZZARD: Is that what you're doing now, painting covers for Marvel?

GULACY: Yes. I'm also doing work for *Marvel Preview*. I'm doing a Black Widow story and a cover. I just turned in a cover today. It's for a story called "Paradox," (*Marvel Preview* 24) written by Bill Mantlo and illustrated by Val Mayerik.

WHIZZARD: The Comics Journal reported you would be doing a SHIELD story for a new magazine called *Marvel Universe*.

GULACY: That's not true. I wouldn't touch SHIELD for all the money in the world.

WHIZZARD: Why is that?

GULACY: To be honest with you I think there's no need for me to try to top it. There's no reason for me to do it. It was great when Steranko handled it but I have no interest in it.

WHIZZARD: When did you first run across Steranko's work?

GULACY: A guy in high school wanted to trade an issue of *SHIELD* for a *Captain America* by Kirby. It was the first time I saw his work and it really knocked me out. I thought to myself if I was ever to draw comics this is the way I would do it. That was the feeling I got from Steranko's work.

I adopted a Steranko style because it was exciting and I could do it easily and quickly. But I feel by the third issue, I was going into another direction.

A lot of artists have their own specialties. Steranko is great at the layouts, I had the cinematic storytelling, Corben had the color, Wrightson had the monsters and so forth. That's the way I look at it. My main thing was telling stories cinematically. That's all I was interested in.

WHIZZARD: Would you say that your work is an extension of his?

GULACY: Maybe it was at the beginning, but not anymore. An artist can't do another artist's thinking for him. You can look at Boris [Vallejo] and Jeff Jones, who were terribly influenced by Frank Frazetta, and they went off totally on their own course. Every artist has a different approach. You can't duplicate it—visually or emotionally. If my work is an extension of Jim's, I just hope that it is in terms of entertainment value. Maybe that's what I've been after all along, to entertain the readers as much as he did.

WHIZZARD: Isn't Don McGregor a pretty big fan of Steranko's work?

GULACY: Yeah.

WHIZZARD: How long ago did you meet him?

GULACY: I met Don about 1976. I bumped into him at Marvel's offices shortly before I quit and he told me about this character he had in mind, a swashbuckling black character. It was intended to be in a weekly newspaper tabloid that Jim Salicrup was putting together but something came up and it never developed. So were were on our own. We had to find our own printer.

WHIZZARD: Who arranged for the *Sabre* excerpt to be printed in *Heavy Metal*?

GULACY: McGregor had arranged that. He had approached *Heavy Metal* and Julie Simmons, who was the art director at the time, was impressed with it and liked it. In fact, she wanted to print it as a serial. Don said, "No, we have our printer," and screwed up everything.

They received a percentage of any orders that came in through *Heavy Metal*.

WHIZZARD: Was the book a big success?

GULACY: Yes, it's in its third printing now and it's also in a French version.

WHIZZARD: Does McGregor take up more space in French or in English?

GULACY: (laughter) Jan and Dean [Mullaney] met with the guy from Paris and he told them that they had a hell of a time. He said it was the most difficult time they ever had trying to translate Don's copy into French.

WHIZZARD: Was *Sabre* designed from a finished script?

GULACY: No it wasn't. I prefer working from a finished script, which means most of the dialog is included. With *Sabre* you could make another book with all the art that was covered by Don's balloons.

WHIZZARD: Have you seen the second printing of *Sabre*?

GULACY: Yes. The cover reproduced poorly. The painting did not look good.

In fact, I'm a victim of bad reproduction. *Epic* suffered. The *Vampirella* I had done for Warren really suffered.

On the cover I did for *Rook* the entire background was eliminated. It was an Alamo battle with about a hundred people. They're not there.

WHIZZARD: How were you paid on *Sabre*?

GULACY: I was paid half up front and

half on completion. I have also been receiving royalties.

WHIZZARD: Was the main model for Sabre Jimi Hendrix or Clint Eastwood?

GULACY: Hendrix. In fact, around the time I was drawing *Sabre* I had just read a biography on Hendrix. I had a rock and roll band when I was young and we played a lot of Hendrix's tunes. It was all coming back to me. The sixties were hitting me like a hammer on the head. I felt that here's another guy that I've got to salute (laughter).

WHIZZARD: He seemed to have Eastwood's eyes.

GULACY: Those are my eyes. I squint in the sunlight quite a bit.

It was a combination of things. I wanted to do a black guy who on one hand was handsome and on the other hand rugged. One of the reasons I took it on is because I had received a lot of letters and phone calls from friends of mine who were readers of *Kung Fu* requesting a black character in the *Kung Fu* series. Somehow it never worked out so I felt I had to oblige their requests.

WHIZZARD: Was it your idea to make Sabre black?

GULACY: There was a period where he started out black and was going to become white half way through the book (laughter). There were just countless phonecalls and arguments that seemed to delay that book more and more.

WHIZZARD: Did Eclipse Enterpirses raise any objections about Sabre being black?

GULACY: No. They didn't care. They were mainly interested in the final product.

WHIZZARD: What type of editorial control did Eclipse have over what would appear in *Sabre*?

GULACY: We had total control. In fact, that is what created a lot of arguments. I felt that things should be deleted and things should be added. It needed editorial overseeing badly. I had to speak up. Someone had to. The over-all appearance of it was, more or less, on my shoulders.

WHIZZARD: How successful do you think the book was, in terms of storytelling?

GULACY: It was just a good thing to get away from *Master of Kung Fu*, to be able to do another character. I didn't want to be constantly shadowed by *Master of Kung Fu*.

I don't think there was anything spectacular about the storytelling in *Sabre*. There were two or three pages that I personally liked.

WHIZZARD: Were you approached to do the *Sabre* sequel?

GULACY: Don and Dean came over about a month ago and presented me with the synopsis. It was a good story. In fact, it's probably better than the original.

"WHEN IT BECOMES NASEOUS THAT'S WHEN YOU KNOW YOU HAVE TO QUIT. YOU HAVE TO SAY GOODBYE....THAT'S WHAT WAS HAPPENING WITH ME..."

But Don expects me to personify his little fantasies and I won't. I refuse to do that sort of thing. I said, "Look, we gotta change this. We have to get rid of the transsexual." (laughter) There's also a scene where Melissa is giving birth to a child while at the same time a gun battle is going on in the same room. He wanted me to draw that. I said, "Listen, Don you can't have this. You can't be serious. Come to your senses." He refused to change a few things and I told him he'd have to find another artist. They're scouting around now.

WHIZZARD: In *Mediascene* you said, "I'm tired of making all these comic book writers famous." Do you still maintain that view?

GULACY: (laughter) You would bring that up. That was my little Muhammad Ali routine. Don and Doug were infuriated to say the least (laughter).

What I mean is that whenever you see my name next to a writer's, it means that I'm collaborating with this person. I'm very concerned with what the storyline is about, the characters involved, and so forth. I feel that I invest enough effort and creativity into a lot of the stories to receive a co-plot credit on the opening page. But I don't ask for it because it's not that important to me.

WHIZZARD: How did you replace the pages of *Sabre* that were lost in the mail?

GULACY: The first seven were lost. They were redrawn from memory.

WHIZZARD: Other than the first seven pages of *Sabre*, has any of your other work been lost or damaged in the mail?

GULACY: (laughter) Before that, I think two pages from one of the *Kung Fu* specials were lost because I sent it to Marvel without addressing it in care of anyone. It should have been sent to Romita at the time. The package was lost in the fan mail and no one could find it so it was redrawn by Romita.

WHIZZARD: Is it true that Craig Russell had done some work on *Sabre*?

GULACY: Yes. He inked several pages towards the end of the story.

WHIZZARD: Didn't you have time to finish it?

GULACY: I was tired and willing to pay Craig his price. Then he became tired.

WHIZZARD: Have you done any substantial amount of comic work that has been purchased but never printed?

GULACY: I did a horror story for Marvel that Marv Wolfman had written. It's filed away in a cabinet somewhere. I also did a ten page *Rook* story for Warren that was never used.

WHIZZARD: Do they have any house policies at Warren that make working there different than anywhere else?

GULACY: Yes. They enjoy artists who come in and want to work without asking for money (laughter).

Actually, they're very responsible as far as paying. A few years ago I understand the artists and writers were not getting paid at all. It eventually became better but now they went into a slump again and that's why I'm currently not working over there.

Warren had a large inventory of scripts that date back ten years ago and still haven't been used. If I wanted to work for Warren tomorrow I would be handed one of these scripts and I wouldn't want that right now. I have to work with someone I'm compatible with.

WHIZZARD: What writers do you feel most compatible with?

GULACY: So far Don McGregor and Doug Moench, but I'm sure there will be others in the future.

WHIZZARD: Is there anything like a self-imposed Comics Code Authority at Warren?

GULACY: Yes, Jim Warren does not allow ladies of the night to be drawn. No prostitutes. That's one policy that's always

baffled me.

WHIZZARD: Are there any other things that Jim Warren doesn't allow in his books besides hookers?

GULACY: He doesn't allow good stories. He's like *Heavy Metal*, he doesn't want anything that makes sense. If it's got a beginning, a middle and an ending he doesn't want to deal with it. I'm only kidding, just a joke (laughter).

WHIZZARD: Was "The Trespassers" in *Eerie* meant to be a series?

GULACY: That was originally a 12 page short story for *Heavy Metal*. Julie Simmons was semi-interested but she was losing her seat to another art director at the time. They didn't like it because it was a realistic story. It wouldn't fit in.

That's just an example of what it's like working with Don. You start out with a 12 page story and it ends up being an epic. It went over 20 pages.

WHIZZARD: Do you feel that story was more successful than "Blood on Black Satin?"

GULACY: "Blood on Black Satin" was definitely my finest job to date. In fact, I feel that's the best story that Warren had ever ran of all time. Of all time. (laughter).

I'm talking about storyline. I'm not talking about looking at it from an artistic point of view. You have to read the story and relate the pictures with the words. I thought it was a powerful horror story.

WHIZZARD: Do you have any plans of doing a sequel?

GULACY: No, but there are other horror stories that I would like to do.

That story developed like a lot of the *Kung Fu* issues Doug and I worked on. We would start out with a very nebulous idea. That's the way we work. That's the way I enjoy working.

I would call Doug and say, "Let's do a horror story for Warren." He'd say, "What do you think?" I'd say, "I don't know, what do you think?" Then I'd say, "Let's try this. A guy drives into an old English town and all of a sudden there's ghosts and demons and broads and knives. You take it from there" (laughter).

They usually come in at the spur of the moment like that. We could talk about it for an hour without coming up with any ideas and during the last ten minutes of our conversation we come up with this perfect plotline.

WHIZZARD: That story was unique in that none of the characters were patterned after movie celebrities. Did you have your hands slapped for doing that?

GULACY: I was never warned about that at Warren.

At Marvel they were upset about Shang-chi resembling Bruce Lee.

There was even a rumor going around that Bruce Lee's wife had called Stan Lee and told him to knock it off. I don't know how true that is.

WHIZZARD: Were you ever officially told to stop?

GULACY: I was told about it when Marv Wolfman was editor. He told me to stop it but I didn't. I kept on doing it.

In fact, since Bruce Lee had died I found that it was a good outlet to keep the mystique alive. I attribute the large sales figures to the fact that the Shang-chi character resembled Bruce Lee.

WHIZZARD: Why do you pattern characters after celebrities?

GULACY: The reason I do that is because I grew up watching these people's movies. I feel it's my tribute to those actors—my salute to them.

The reason I didn't do it in "Blood on Black Satin" is because people got on me about the Coburn thing. They said, "It's silly." I said, "Oh, you're crazy."

If there was a role in a television pilot or a movie I thought Coburn would be perfect for a role like that: the quiet intense doctor who comes in as a loner figure. I decided to knock it off. But I'm back at it again.

WHIZZARD: At the time did the large fan popularity of Jim Starlin, present any problems working on the series?

GULACY: At the time I wasn't aware of the popularity that he had achieved. I was anxious for a monthly book and it seemed to be right up my alley. Don't ask me the things that led up to Starlin leaving the book. He did tell me one night in a bar in a Ramada Inn. We were both drinking heavily. I do remember asking the question but the answer went in one ear and out the other.

WHIZZARD: Was the visualization of the Brynocki character totally ours?

GULACY: Yea.

WHIZZARD: Were there many letters asking that that character make a return appearance?

GULACY: I had a few.

WHIZZARD: In *Master of Kung Fu* there were hardly ever any letters printed that commented on the artwork of the nonGulacy issues. Were they that unfavorable?

GULACY: I think that speaks for itself (laughter). Whenever I inked one of my stories I would get so far behind they would have to slip in an inventory piece by another artist. It might have upset the readers when a stranger came in and broke the continuity.

WHIZZARD: When Shang-chi defeated the Chankar character in *Master of Kung Fu* 46 it seemed he did so with a low blow. Wouldn't something like that be considered outside the realm of decency by the Comics Code?

GULACY: (laughter) Not outside the realm of sales figures. Readers loved it. It wasn't drawn graphically; it was only hinted at.

WHIZZARD: Since there were four different editors on *Master of Kung Fu*, were there any significant policy changes? Did anyone ever say, "We've been doing this book totally wrong. Let's scrap all that and do this now?"

GULACY: Not a chance. Stan Lee would fire them.

WHIZZARD: Stan Lee was proud of the book?

GULACY: He loved it. In fact, he still brings it up. He still talks about it at staff meetings.

WHIZZARD: Do you have a good relationship with Stan Lee?

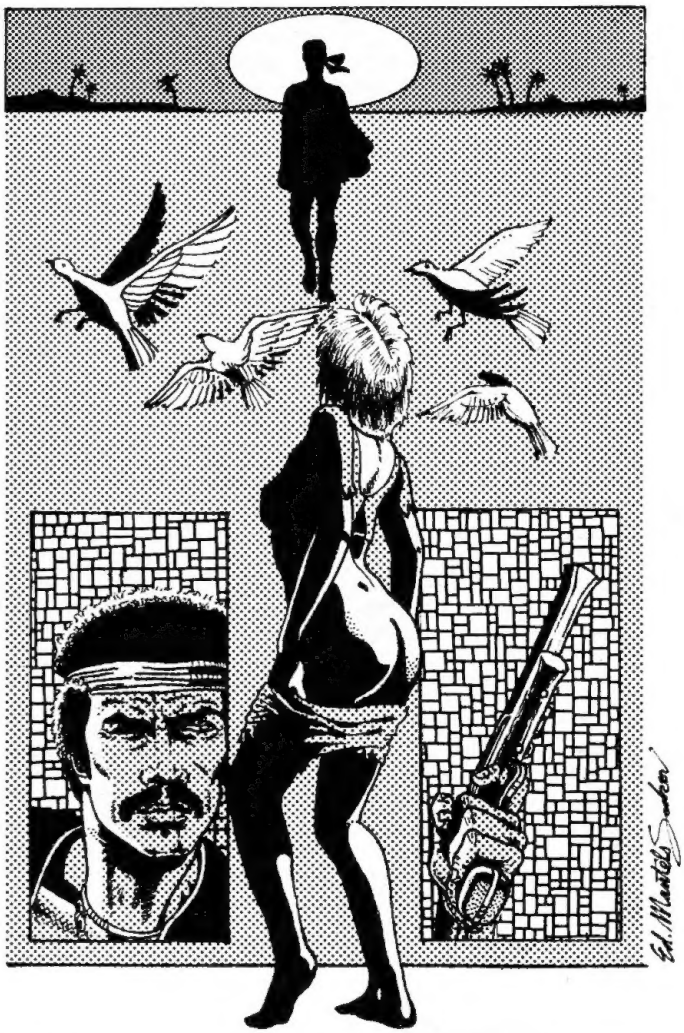
GULACY: I've spoken with him only once. When I quit the book he called me and asked why I quit. He wished me luck with my other endeavors and gave me a raise.

WHIZZARD: Will you be doing any more four-color comics?

GULACY: No.

WHIZZARD: What factors kept you off the covers while you were doing the book?

GULACY: My splash page was essentially



my cover. At the time they weren't crazy about me doing covers. They wouldn't go with any kind of montage design. After they had seen the splashes they were finally convinced that it was a nice thing.

Another thing is that I just didn't have enough time.

WHIZZARD: When you started doing covers, did the computer price codes present any problems?

GULACY: It was a minor thing. But I'm not doing any profound art. It's only a comic cover. You know who your readers are and you just try and make it as appealing as possible.

WHIZZARD: Which do you feel was the best issue of that series?

GULACY: There's only one issue that I consider my personal favoirte. It was "The Murder Agency" (*Master of Kung Fu* 40). It was one of the few stories that held up from beginning to end, like "Blood on Black Satin." It just flowed.

I got turned on to the cinematic approach to comics and that's where I felt it reached its peak during my stay at Marvel. It came together well on that particular issue.

WHIZZARD: Besides the *Master of Kung Fu* covers, you did covers at Marvel for *Logan's Run, Spectacular Spiderman,* and *Rawhide Kid.* Were these simply assignments or were you personally interested in these books?

GULACY: Jim Shooter would call and ask, "Do you want covers?" I would say, "Sure, send me a couple."

WHIZZARD: Are you a *Rawhide Kid* fan?

GULACY: I wanted to do a western. It's nice to do something different for a change. I also always wanted to draw *Spiderman,* or do something with the character. If I couldn't do a story I wanted to do at least a pinup, which I did—a calendar drawing.

WHIZZARD: If you had the time, would you prefer to ink all your pencils?

GULACY: Yes. Ever since *Sabre,* I decided that I would do all of my own inking.

WHIZZARD: What inkers have you been most satisfied with?

GULACY: I thought Pablo Marcos did a good job. Dan Adkins probably did the best.

WHIZZARD: What was your relationship with Dan Adkins?

GULACY: Dan Adkins was more responsible than anyone for getting me into the business. I've been beating him severely ever since.

WHIZZARD: Did you work with him at the same time as Craig Russell and Val Mayerick?

GULACY: No, Craig was the first. He lived near Adkins.

WHIZZARD: Did the three of you perform the same function?

GULACY: Right. We'd take turns driving Dan to see Elvis Presley films (laughter).

WHIZZARD: Were you officially an assistant?

GULACY: I never worked with or for Adkins. Craig and Val studied with Adkins but I would just meet with Dan once a week while I was going to art school. I would drive back and forth and show him my work. Finally, when he felt it looked good enough, he gave Roy [Thomas] a call and things went on from there.

WHIZZARD: Why did you leave Marvel Comics?

GULACY: I was just tired. When it becomes nauseous that's when you know you have to quit. You have to say goodbye. You have to do something different. That's what was happening with me.

WHIZZARD: When you design a page you

PAUL GULACY INDEX

Listings are in the following sequence: title, issue number, number of pages of work, story title, writer, penciller, inker, and date of publication. "+ " indicates work the featured artist did besides pencilling or inking.

COLOR OVERGROUNDS/MARVEL

Daredevil

108 19 "Cry...Beetle!" Steve Gerber Bob Brown Paul Gulacy *(3/74)*

Fear

20 15 "Morbius, The Living Vampire!" Mike Friedrich Paul Gulacy Jack Abel *(2/74)*

Giant Size Master of Kung Fu

1 24 "Death Masque!" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy and Dan Adkins *(9/74)*

2 40 "The Devil Doctor's Triumph" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Jack Abel *(12/74)*

3 40 "Fires of Rebirth" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Vince Colletta *(3/75)*

Master of Kung Fu

18 18 "Attack!" Steve Englehart Paul Gulacy Al Milgrom *(6/74)*

19 18 "Retreat" Steve Englehart Paul Gulacy Al Milgrom *(8/74)*

20 18 "Weapon of the Soul" Gerry Conway Paul Gulacy Al Milgrom *(9/74)*

22 17 "A Fortune of Death!" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy and Dan Adkins *(11/74)*

25 17 "Rites of Courage, Fists of Death!" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Sal Trapani *(2/75)*

29 18 "The Crystal Connection" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy *(6/75)*

30 18 "A Gulf of Lions" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy with Dan Adkins *(7/75)*

31 18 "Snow Buster" Moench Gulacy w/Dan Adkins

33 18 "Wicked Messenger of Madness" Moench Paul Gulacy with Dan Adkins *(10/75)*

34 19 "Cyclone at the Center of a Madman's Crown!" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Dan Adkins *(11/75)*

35 18 "Death-Hand and the Sun of Mordillo" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Dan Adkins

38 18 "Cat" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Dan Adkins *(3/76)*

39 17 "Fight Without Pity" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy *(4/76)*

40 17 "The Murder Agency" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy *(5/76)*

42 17 "The Clock of Shattered Time" Moench Paul Gulacy Tom Sutton *(7/76)*

43 17 "A Flash of Purple Sparks" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Jack Abel *(8/76)*

44 17 "Prelude: Golden Daggers (A Death Run)" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Jack Abel

45 17 "Part One (Shang-Chi): The Death Seed!" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Pablo Marcos

46 17 "Part Two (Clive Reston): The Spider Spell!" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Pablo Marcos *(11/76)*

47 17 "Part III (Leiko Wu): Phantom Sand" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Pablo Marcos *(12/76)*

48 17 "Part IV (Black Jack Tarr): City in the Top of the World" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Jack Abel & Pablo Marcos + co-plot

49 17 "Part V (Sir Denis Nayland Smith): The Affair of the Agent Who Died!" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Pablo Marcos *(2/77)*

50 17 "Part VI (Fu Manchu): The Dreamslayer!" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy Mike Esposito

MAGAZINES

Marvel

Deadly Hands of Kung Fu

3 15 "Web of Bleeding Vipers!" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy with Al Milgrom *(8/74)*

frequently divide up single pictures into several different panels. What effect are you striving for with this technique?

GULACY: That's usually just camera movement—a pan. It's to slow down the readers' eyes. I've been criticized in the past for doing that.

It's not meant to be sequential. I'm not moving characters around within the individual panels. It's just one scene that's slowed down.

WHIZZARD: Have you ever considered doing any storyboarding for films?

GULACY: Yes, that's one of my main goals. In fact I just completed some pre-production artwork involving costume design and storyboard work for a film being written and directed by Ed Summer. He's got Gary Kurtz interested in producing it and they're on the verge of selling it in Hollywood now. But other than that, I also do advertising work that occasionally calls for storyboards.

WHIZZARD: Do you like that field better than drawing comics?

GULACY: The money is much better. I can do the work more quickly, also.

WHIZZARD: Do you have any general rules about what should happen within a page?

GULACY: Yeah. For one thing, I agree with Steranko when he says that the storytelling is more important than the art. You have to let the readers use their imaginations which Jim was an expert at. He wouldn't explain how Nick Fury got from a rocket sled to a futuristic motorcycle in a turn of a page. It was just there. Bang. It doesn't need explanation. You accept it. That's called pacing a story.

You also have to know how to use space because you're restricted in size which is good because you can't have composition without limitations.Lighting is also very important for dramatic effect. Large closeups at the beginning of a story should also be used to familiarize the readers with the characters.

All these things I take into consideration. I try to make the reader an eyewitness to the events taking place. But also you have to keep in mind that the plotline, the dialog, and the color are equally important to make a good story. Each of these things should complement the other.

WHIZZARD: With artists who use a cinematic approach, there seems to be a lot of gimmicks that are overdone.

GULACY: That's true. I remember seeing a panel that an artist had drawn on an army tank moving towards a bright sunset. On the right-hand side of the panel was a large glistening reflection implying that the sun was a reflection off a camera lens. Now to me that's a little too gimmicky and ludicrous.

You know, cinematic storytelling doesn't necessarily mean that it has to be four or five panels with someone or something moving within the contents of those given spaces. You could be very conservative in your panel arrangements and still be cinematic. It all depends on how you set up the composition of the shot and where the supposed camera eye is fixed.

WHIZZARD: Have you studied any film?

GULACY: I wanted to, but I haven't.

WHIZZARD: Do you feel you're a frustrated filmmaker working on comics?

GULACY: I'm frustrated in many things. I'm a frustrated tennis player. I'm a frustrated musician, singer, comedian. I'll find my plateau one of these days.

Right now, I'd hate to abandon art for film I feel my art is stronger. [*to pg. 17*]

Dracula Lives
9 10 "Scarlet in Glory!" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy with Mike Esposito *(11/74)*

Vampire Tales
7 07 "Bats" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy with Duffy Vohland *(10/74)*
10 01 frontispiece with Duffy Vohland *(4/75)*

Warren

Eerie
103 Part One: "The Tresspasser" Don McGregor Paul Gulacy *(8/79)*
104 08 Part Two: "The Tresspasser: Dusk" Don McGregor Paul Gulacy *(9/79)*
105 06 Part Three: "The Tresspasser: Dusk In Ruins" Don McGregor PG *(10/79)*
109 16 "Blood on Black Satin" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy (part one) *(2/80)*
110 08 "Blood on Black Satin" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy (part two) *(4/80)*
111 12 "Blood on Black Satin" Doug Moench Paul Gulacy (part three) *(6/80)*

Marvel

Epic Illustrated
3 06 "Libido" Moench Gulacy *(Fall 1980)*

Hm Communications

Heavy Metal
15 10 excerpt from *Sabre* appears on pgs. 16-25

Hustler Mag., Inc.

Hustler
V4#5 01 ad illustration for hand held movie projector on page 16.
02 illustration for an article by Jonathan Black (pp. 40-41) *(11/77)*

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The Adventures of Honey Hooker *(1977)*

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Star Fems (Spacegirl)
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Contemporary Pictorial Literature (C.P.L.)
6 "art"
7 "illos"
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4 01 "spot illustration of Dr. Strange"
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14 02 centerspread

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Dragonflame & Other Bedtime Nightmares
06 written by Don McGregor, cover & six b&w 4 x 6 illustrations by Paul Gulacy, published by Fictioneer Books *(1978)*
Sabre
01 38 "Slow Fade of an Endangered Species" Don McGregor Paul Gulacy Paul Gulacy (Craig Russell inked pgs. 25, 29,31,32,37. b&w. wrap-around cover painting by Paul Gulacy *(1978)*
Sabre poster
by Paul Gulacy *(1978)*

Sabre

By Marty Klug

In **Life of Brian** there's a charming scene where Graham Chapman is beseiged by a mob of unwanted followers. He tells them they should go away, they are individuals, they should think for themselves, and they don't need leaders. The crowd enthusiastically agrees and a moment later pleads in unison, "Tell us more!" It is this striving for individuality in a conformist society which pervades Don McGregor and Paul Gulacy's comic classic **Sabre**.

Sabre, published by Eclipse Enterprises, has sold out two printings since its first appearance in August 1978 and currently a sequel is being prepared. Its well-printed 38 black and white pages combine the talents of McGregor and Gulacy, whose Marvel comic work in **Amazing Adventures** and **Master of Kung Fu**, respectively, has gained them a loyal audience.

In the story Sabre, a black rebel, and Melissa Siren attempt to rescue their imprisoned allies from cybernetic captors in an America of 2020. McGregor's imaginative tale is touched with irony: it features a fight of archaic and modern weaponry, a fatal battle in an amusement park, and a struggle for honor among killers. His strength in **Sabre** lies in plotting and developing mood; it is not in his setting, characterization or theme which are often uninspired and compromised by relentless didacticism. **Sabre** is still a light, entertaining tale of swashbuckling heroics, however, while it may be quite graphic at times, it certainly isn't very novel.

Unhindered by the editorial and commerical restrictions of Marvel Comics, and guaranteed a carte blanche policy from Eclipse Enterprises, one would expect in such a beautifully produced book that McGregor would reach out and cover new ground. One would be very disappointed.

Although the book developed from McGregor's "Dagger," an aborted newspaper strip, its creative roots can be traced back to his popular Killraven series in **Amazing Adventures**. Both Killraven and Sabre are sword-swinging rebels hunted in post-catastrophe 21st century despotisms. Sabre, a different black character with the same name, even appeared in **Amazing Adventures** 22 in 1973. Explicit violence, occasional profanity and minor nudity (and even an obscure sound effect such as "FLICK") appear in **Sabre** but with only superficial treatment. Despite its other shortcomings, it relies far too heavily on the successful mainstream formula of developing style over substance.

> "IT RELIES FAR TOO HEAVILY ON THE SUCCESSFUL MAINSTREAM FORMULA OF DEVELOPING STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE..."

McGregor's futuristic setting is cluttered with many elements that he tosses around like theatrical props—which under critical view seem misplaced and poorly developed. Common science fiction subjects such as brainwashing, eugenics, nuclear disaster and totalitarianism decorate **Sabre**'s background, but often lack any political or technological soundness. Instead, McGregor spotlights more imaginative and painfully inappropriate aspects: one must indure skeleton rapists, mermaid cyborgs, and tiger-faced villainy. If McGregor would simply abandon such frivolities, concentrate on fewer areas, and develop their implications, his script would seem less cuttered and more complex.

Scientific plausibility has never been the mainstay of comics storytelling. Surely, some violations contribute to the entertainment value—provided they do not detract attention from the plot. **Doctor Strange** would be an awful bore if it was constrained to the realms of realism. Steve Ditko's **Spiderman** would hardly be as popular if Peter Parker, after being bit by a radioactive spider, contracted leukemia and died. **Space 1999** would be even more dull without its ludicrous Velikovskian premise of planetary billiards. When violating physical laws, though, a reasonable degree of believability, or at least a consistency, should be maintained.

Additionally, just because a story is heroic fantasy doesn't necessarily mean characters behave irrationally. E.R. Eddison, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien created fanciful castes which are widely acceptable because they do not grossly violate normal psychological behavior. Most superhero fiction, regrettably, either never tries or rarely succeeds in achieving such a standard.

Many of the technological assumptions of **Sabre** are not only scientifically unsound but stretch the suspension of disbelief to the point of breaking. Overseer —a prosthetic commander who rules from an amusement park, of all places— captures Sabre and attempts to "change [his] attitude" by negating each memory." Sabre is not threatened with overt physical torture, surgical or chemical treatment, or even subtle operant reconditioning. How does Overseer, a feudal leader who controls a high-technology survellience system, convince Sabre to see the light? He hangs him in the air by ropes and shows him Siren being sexually assaulted.

Siren's sense of alienation is based on an equally ludicrous assumption. Conceived and gestated completely **in vitro** and, presumably, raised through "motivation classes"; she complains of "not being linked to more than a shape of glass." The baby-factory scenario, popularized by Aldous Huxley's famous 1932 dystopian novel **Brave New World**, is not that medically unlikely. What is unlikely, though, is that Siren has such an exquisite memory to be able to recall her prenatal environment. Whether or not she is a rare case or a common occurence, a point which is never explained, the anarchistic 21st century world of **Sabre** seems ill-equipped in fostering either prospect. Additionally, such a system would have massive social and ethical implications, none of which are adequately addressed.

Limited nuclear disaster is also mentioned by McGregor to indict the industry. However, no viable alternative energy resource is suggested. It's never mentioned how Overseer's survellience system is powered. Admittedly, it seems like an unnecessary hazard for the US nuclear industry to amass in the next ten years an estimated 72 million pounds of highly radioactive wastes, toxic for hundreds of thousands of years, so they can just boil water. However, over 90 percent of nuclear wastes is produced by the military in maintaining an ever-increasing strategic arsenal which already, combined with Soviet armaments, exceeds the yield of 1.3 million Hiroshima-sized bombs. The disposal of hazardous wastes from American industry, which produces 125 billion pounds annually—quantitatively a more formidable threat, remains unmentioned. Addressing the storage problem of toxic wastes is admirable yet

such a criticism which ignores military or non-nuclear wastes seems embarrasingly incomplete.

The political setting, like the technological assumptions, lacks any credibility. McGregor simply covers too many topics with too little depth. In **Sabre** 21st century America is beset with worldwide famine, massive nuclear industry accidents, chemical weaponry plagues, political purges, and widespread terrorism. However, why would a government which employs "open warfare" to subdue dissent tolerate the distribution of mail-ordered lasers? Why would a society passively sit by after NRC oversights obliterated three states? In a military despotism, why would Overseer have to justify his experiments to a Congress? Why does Overseer, who has a high-technology system at his disposal, insist on combatting such a big social menace as Sabre with only a sword?

Beyond the unsoundess of McGregor's technological and political setting, however, lies a far greater problem in characterization. Its weaknesses center in four major areas:visual depiction, stereotypical motivation, irrational behavior and facial appearance.

With Overseer, McGregor disregards some of the more intriguing aspects of the dictator personality for simply visual identification. Costumed characters seem far more appropriate in mainstream comics; it's regrettable that **Sabre** caters to this camp.

One of the inherent problems of costumed characters is that no matter how well they're scripted they lack credibility; live-action television "adaptations" of Spiderman and Captain America could not help but evoke giggles. Some costumes can complement characters, but there must be a character there to begin with. Unfortunately, Overseer graduated from the Darth Vader school: he's big, mean and rotten and "monumental at being evil." While there may exist people who possess such superficial personalities, fiction should aspire for more rounded and credible models who transcend this black and white morality. Maybe McGregor is being allegorical, but then again, perhaps he's just being careless.

Thirdly, some characters grossly violate normal psychological behavior. Willoughby, Overseer's military specialist, passively surrenders to Sabre even though he possesses a vastly superior weapon.

How does one so inept in armed conflict become a high-ranking military specialist?

While on a dangerous mission where every second counts, Sabre procrastinates to swim with mermaids and to talk on the evils of materialism. After being sexually molested, Melissa Siren gives a calm lecture on female psychology to one of her assailants. Such behavior is even more farfetched than McGregor's **Odd Couple** reruns in 2020.

HOW DO YOU FEEL?
FINE
LESS PRESSURED... MORE RELAXED?
OH, MUCH.
THE SOUND OF A ZIPPER... SLOWLY...SLOWLY...MOVING DOWN ITS PRESCRIBED TRACK...IS HEARD ABOVE THEIR WORDS.

OVERSEER: The villain from Eclipse Enterprises' Sabre. all art ©1978 Paul Gulacy.

Fourthly, Paul Gulacy's depiction of movie celebrities as characters in **Sabre** is often distracting. If such a technique is used it should be practiced sparingly. When a celebrity's role parallels the character—such as Bruce Lee and Shang-chi—it might aid reader identication, but a sword-swinging Jimi Hendrix and a Woody Allen soldier seem less justifiable. Furthermore, it leaves an unsettling feeling, like seeing Suzanne Somers as Lady MacBeth, and hampers McGregor's characters from assuming distinct personalities of their own.

Yet poorly developed characterization and setting does not stop a story; pedantic exposition does. McGregor's lectures stifles the pace, disturbs the design, and fails to fully develop its implications.

Since comics are primarily a graphic medium, long exposition is far more glaring than in prose unless it is carefully balanced with the artwork, such as **Chandler**, or integrated into the illustration, such as **Parsifal**. However, since **Sabre** was designed from an unfinished script, dialog was added after the artwork was completed and both copy and illustration compete for attention.

Secondly, such exposition at times tends to be conceptually oversimplified and pedantic. Instead of illustrating his theme through narration or letting his exposition examine the subtle personality and cultural changes from conformity (in this instance, enforced by a despotism) like Vevgeny Zamaytin's **We** or Huxley's **Brave New World**; McGregor caters to the obvious.

SSSSSH DON'T MAKE A SOUND, OR YOU'LL NEVER FIND OUT HOW ALL THIS FUSS AND FURY TURNS OUT.
I'M RATHER INTERESTED, AREN'T YOU?
ACTUALLY, I FEEL NAUSEOUS.
I THINK
I'M GOING
TO FAINT.

> SABRE: "That's how they've always won! People don't want to sacrifice any creature comforts...so they let leaders and select manipulative groups take their freedoms and individualities in little stage. And that's how you die! That's how they lock you in a cage. Not an original observation...I'm merely not accepting the jail sentence. That's my choice!"

Such an observation, even with the exclamation points, does not cast any new light on Sabre's character, plot development, or express new philosophic insights. Unfortunately, McGregor's style lacks Alex Toth's conciseness or Steve Gerber's command for satire, a more effective way or expressing such views. **Life of Brian** said many of the same general things about conformity without becoming overbearing. It is one of many unnecessary digressions which slows the pace and hinders McGregor's script.

One's full development can only come from total awareness of present experience, McGregor seems to suggest—not in producing, selling, trading and repairing material objects. Yet how can a person be totally happy, totally aware, totally secure of their place in the universe, society and voting district without the wonders of electric toothbrushes and pet rocks? How can one be a total individual without dressing, talking and thinking exactly like everyone else? Although some sociological and philosophic problems arise in his positions—beyond the scope of this article, essentially McGregor's major thematic problem is not in what he has to say but how he chooses to say it.

Sabre is an interesting and an entertaining work; it is not a terribly significant one. This is particularly disheartening since the publishing opportunity and the creative talent were available. Hopefully, any sequel will show more careful attention to content as well as form. □

Dick Giordano [pronounced Jor-dan-o] was born July 20, 1932 in New York City. After studying at the School of Industrial Art, he began his career in comics with work on Fiction House's Sheena *for the Jerry Iger Studio in 1951. It was in 1952, however, that Giordano began what was to become his longest association with any comics company—that being Charlton.*

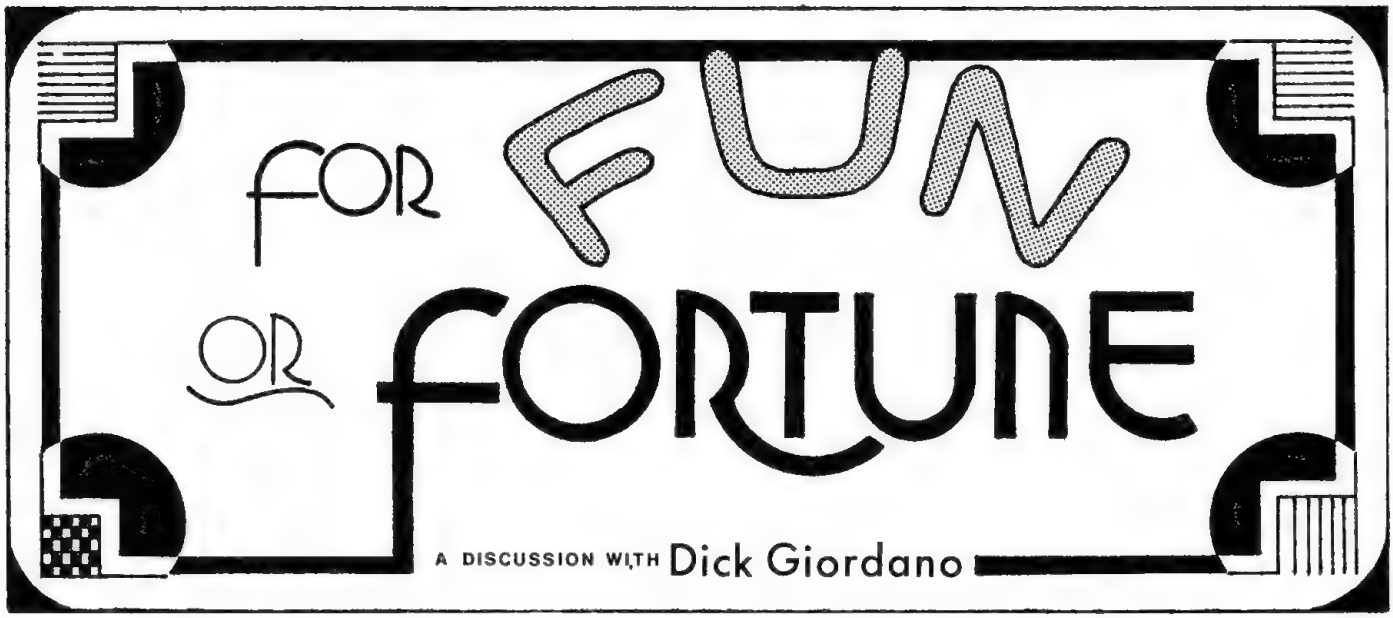
Besides his duties as an artist on Sarge Steel *and other titles, Girdano filled out his 17 year career at Charlton as an assistant editor from 1957-59 and as a managing editor from 1966-68. During his stint as managing editor he instituted a number of innovations, not the least of which was a line of highly praised "action-heroes." Yet despite many impressive experiments, Giordano's rejuvenated Charlton line died an infant's death due to poor sales.*

Shortly after leaving his post as managing editor in 1968, Giordano worked as editor at D.C. While in control of such comics as Hawk and Dove, Beware the Creeper, *and* Aquaman, *his editorial abilities received continued acclaim. None the less, because of conflicts in working with publisher Carmine Infantino, he stepped down as a D.C. editor in 1972, while he remained as an artist.*

Since his editing days, Giordano has added Archie, Marvel, Seaboard, and Warren to his list of comics industry employers that already included Charlton, D.C., Dell, Fiction House, and Lev Gleason. In addition to being a prolific and respected contributor to many aspects of comics production, he has been an active participant in virtually every bettering-of-the-medium oriented organization that has existed since he entered the field. Giordano, with Neal Adams, was a co-founder of Continuity Associates and has subsequently created Dikart and Quickdraw as outlets for his many artistic talents.

This phone interview was conducted by Jerry E. Durrwachter on Aug. 6, 1980.

[It should be noted that shortly before this issue went to press it was announced that Giordano has renewed his editorial status at D.C. Among the titles he will edit are Batman, Brave & Bold, *and* Detective. *Estimating that his editing responsibilities will only take 25-30% of his time, he plans to stay deeply involved in his merchandising work for D.C.].*



WHIZZARD: Did you start at Charlton in 1952?

GIORDANO: Exactly. As a matter of fact it was New Year's Day, 1952. I met my editor on New Year's Eve and started working the day after that. I'm surprised that you knew that. Outside of my family there's very few people that do. (laughter)

WHIZZARD: In 1967 when you became a managing editor what were your duties?

GIORDANO: My first function at Charlton as a managing editor was to add to the staff. There had been a staff of people that had been there for some time which I was obligated to use. Unfortunately, Ditko wasn't on the art staff when I got there. He had been earlier. So had I. Around that time he started to do *Spiderman*, although he did some things for me afterwards on a few assignments.

I went through the files of the people that had sent samples of their work. Included in this group was Jim Aparo, Pat Boyette, and a handful of others who I contacted solely on the basis of those samples. It was a lot of hard work because I really didn't have any budget to work with to recruit people.

I think Charlton approached publishing comics from a viewpoint of cutting their losses rather than making a profit. They didn't want to invest money in products. Their attitude was really short-sighted; they thought there was no possibility in making money on them. That's probably one of the reasons why their comic line stopped.

WHIZZARD: Who came up with the idea of revamping the Blue Beetle?

GIORDANO: That was strictly Steve's idea. He came up with it one day with some sketches and he gave me an idea of what he had in mind. It was that quick. He designed the bug, the costume, and he even decided on the color. Although, I think there might have been other people who appeared in the byline of it.

WHIZZARD: In *Captain Atom* the Blue Beetle scripts were credited to Gary Friedrich, but it said that Steve Ditko came up with the plot.

GIORDANO: Steve did a great deal of material. Although he didn't always write *Captain Atom* he did write *Blue Beetle* all the time which anyone can see.

WHIZZARD: Were you responsible for putting Rocke Mastroserio with Ditko on *Captain Atom*?

GIORDANO: Yes, I suppose. Mastroserio was one of the staff artists I had to use. He was living and working in Derby at the time and if you look at those books you'll see that he use to do about 70 per cent of the covers, which were generally layed out by me but pencilled and inked by Rocke. He passed away a couple of years ago.

Since Steve was writing and drawing both *Blue Beetle* and The Question he didn't have much time to devote to other Charlton projects. It became impossible for him to do things like *Captain Atom* by himself. He had to have help on that.

WHIZZARD: The ninth and tenth issues of Sarge Steel (*Secret Agent*) were separated by a year. Did you have plans doing further work on the series or was that just an inventory story?

GIORDANO: I think there might have been

four scripts written and only two of them were actually used. They were held in inventory as far as I know up until this day. Somebody may have plans to use them. I don't even know where they are.

WHIZZARD: How did Sarge Steel develop?

GIORDANO: It started out in the storyline as a detective scout, sort of a secret agent. The first story for *Sarge Steel* was by Pat MaSulli. I did the art in the first issue.

WHIZZARD: Do you know the story behind Denny O'Neil and the Sergius O'Shaugnessy pseudonym?

GIORDANO: Nothing other than the fact that he preferred to sign his work by that name. He was doing something for Marvel at that time and maybe that was why.

Denny and I were fairly close from the beginning and I believe that he enjoyed working for me despite the fact we didn't have a whole lot of money. As a matter of fact, when I invited Denny to join us I told him, "You're not going to make any money at all, but you're going to have a lot of fun." (laughter) It was a statement that turned out being true. He made no money but he had a lot of fun.

WHIZZARD: What were the rates at Charlton?

GIORDANO: It would have been about $5 a page for a strip. That was pencil and ink. You have to realize the time and effort that goes into that.

I managed to improve that rate somewhat without costing the company any more money. I made contact with a studio in South America and they were able to produce artwork at a fraction of the normal rate. They were in our files too. Having discovered this, I went down to the publisher at the time and said, "Rather than the company establishing rates I would like to dispense the money as I see fit as long as we remain within the established budget." I managed to save money a number of ways partly by using the South American artists.

Also, if you look closely you'll see that some of the covers are photostats of the inside art. I did that so I could pay Steve Ditko, Denny O'Neil and others a little more.

WHIZZARD: How much material was in inventory on cancelled titles?

GIORDANO: I had neither the time, the people, nor the physical strength to store too much material. There might have been one issue or part of one issue in the works at the time when superhero titles were cancelled.

It was usually no more than one issue. As a general rule, Charlton wouldn't cancel any book that still had more than one issue on the shelf. They would continue to publish it eventually to use up the inventory.

WHIZZARD: When titles were cancelled, was there writing on the wall before it happened?

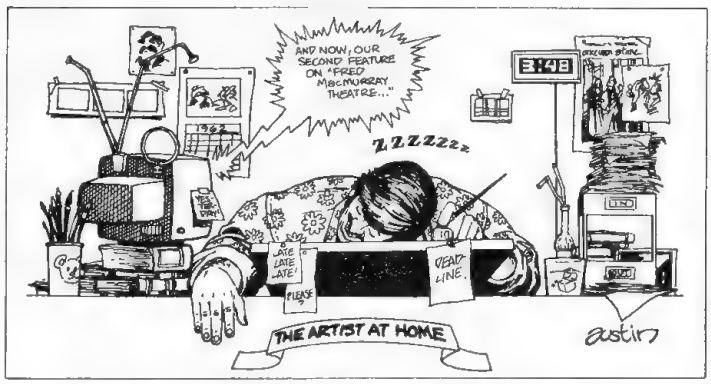
GIORDANO: The day it happened we were all surprised. The sales reports would come in Tuesday and then on Wednesday we would sit down and realize that it would have to be cancelled. When I was executive editor there I was privy to everything in the company. There weren't that many things were kept from me.

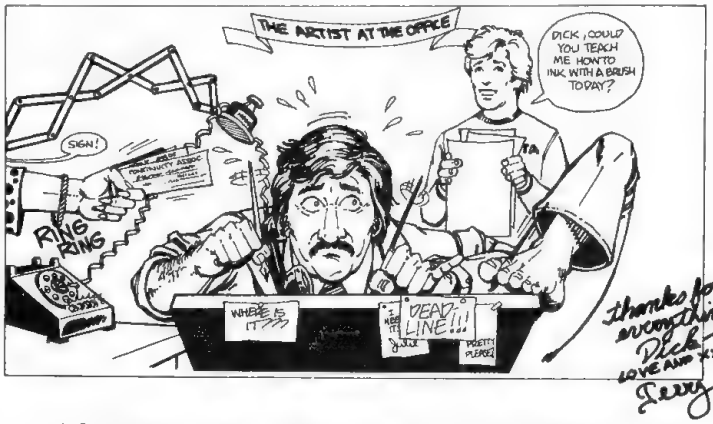
WHIZZARD: There were no superhero titles that had sales respectful enough to continue?

GIORDANO: The sales were not acceptable to continue.I admitted that at the time and I admit it now. I also think the lack of sales had little to do with the quality of the material.

WHIZZARD: Do you think the poor sales were due to the label?

*GIORDANO:*Certainly. At that time,though,with any book it was virtually impossible to see more than 40% of the printrun no matter who the publisher was.





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WHIZZARD: When you left Charlton many of the creative people you worked with there—such as Ditko, Boyette, Skeates—followed you over to DC. Had there been a deal worked out between you and DC that you would bring your own creative staff with you?

GIORDANO: Not at all.

WHIZZARD: Did you enjoy doing the superhero books?

GIORDANO: As a matter of fact, I'm not really interested in that. If you remember at the time, with the exception of *Captain Atom*, none of the characters really had any super powers. Most of them had a special gimmick such as martial arts or something. The superhero books still have limited appeal with me.

But that's where the action was.

I pride myself in working in the area that most appealed to the people reading comics at that time. I didn't have any problems working with any of the categories. The action was in superheroes and we didn't really have any. But I had more fun doing that because that's where the talent was.

WHIZZARD: Why do you think your books at DC didn't live very long lives?

GIORDANO: It must have been something I did. I have to admit I don't have a very good track record (laughter). It's very difficult for me to place the blame anywhere but on myself.

They did get a lot of critical acclaim. People that are still there remember those books. I am still adored by one and all (laughter).

The fact is, I've heard some of my books sold really well and I might have been misinformed at the time. I'm not going to say what I suspect happened. I've been told by people that would know that information that *Aquaman* had sold as well as anything else on the line.

WHIZZARD: Steve Skeates has asserted (in *The Comics Journal* 47) that *Aquaman* was cancelled for reasons other than poor sales. Could you comment on this?

GIORDANO: I have been told recently that that was the case. At the time I left there Carmine [Infantino] and I were still on speaking terms, definitely quite friendly, but we didn't always get along as editor and artist. I didn't get along with a lot of people as editor either. I know that some problems existed between us and I am not quite convinced that they might have influenced those decisions.

WHIZZARD: What was your level of involvement on the *Green Lantern /Green Arrow* book?

GIORDANO: Actually, Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams set up those stories together. It was decided that the series was going to be cancelled anyway so we thought we might as well experiment and have a little fun with it. I was involved with the discussions which lead up to the book.

From what I was told, the series was kept on schedule for a longer time than it ordinarily would have been. There was a lot of publicity from it.

WHIZZARD: Usually if a book fails in one medium they don't try it out in another medium. Why were there two paperback books of the series released?

GIORDANO: I suppose that's true but I have found at times sales figures have not always been that important to publishers. For example, there was many times when Carmine would return *Strange Sports Stories* to the line up and there was absolutely nothing to indicate that there was a demand or a need for that type of

book. It sold very very poorly the first time it was published. It sold very, very poorly the second time it was published.

WHIZZARD: He also did sports stories at Warren.

GIORDANO: When he did sports stories for Warren there was a different amount of money and a different type of merchandising involved. The whole book wasn't named *Sports Stories*. I think Carmine just happened to like sports stories. I enjoyed them too. I inked quite a few of them.

Nevertheless, there wasn't any good reason for that. But then, when you're the publisher you can do what you want.

WHIZZARD: Did the use of partial pages at DC present any production problems?

GIORDANO: That policy was prompted by the fact that we had ⅓ and ½ page ads that had no place else to go. Very often in comics the stories are done to accomodate the ads. If those size ads didn't show up you'd often find a house ad there.

WHIZZARD: Was that policy also to give the impression that one was getting more pages for their money?

GIORDANO: Getting pages for the money wasn't an issue like it is today. We had maybe six pages of full page ads, in the book and a few half page ads and some house ads. The artists, writers and colorists got paid for a full page. It was a relief for me because I made a few dollars extra.

WHIZZARD: Did you do the inking on the first *Hot Wheels* book?

GIORDANO: Yes. I did that first issue with an old friend of mine, Alex Toth. There's no way I would have let anyone else do that. It would have hurt me just too much. In fact, I did give a couple of issues to Vince Colletta and then went back to doing it myself. I'm not criticizing Vince on that. I have my own attitudes about the way the book should look and that's what I decided.

WHIZZARD: Did you pick Toth or did he approach you?

GIORDANO: I called Alex. He wasn't even working for the company at the time.

I tried to make him comfortable. In previous experience he had some problems with comic books and that's why he had left and gone out by himself. I had to convince him that there was a different attitude there—that his book would be respected more. I tried to show him that I respected his talent.

WHIZZARD: Why did you step down as editor at DC?

GIORDANO: I stepped down by choice. Carmine and I had some disagreements. Both of us felt our approaches were correct but I couldn't enforce my attitudes and he couldn't enforce his. Things happened which I became increasingly dissatisfied with and I decided to step down. I wasn't fired.

WHIZZARD: It was just a mutual agreement that you wouldn't edit material?

GIORDANO: I probably would have done it anyway. If anyone pays any attention to my career they'll find I leave places every three or four years. I never stay any longer than that.

WHIZZARD: Are you under contract to DC now?

GIORDANO: Yes I am.

WHIZZARD: Wnat does that contract hold you to?

GIORDANO: My contract is for a year and I have to do a certain minimum amount of work during that time. There are some restrictions. They don't want me working for a competitive book. I can't do Marvel color comics, although I can work for their black and white magazines.

Through my contract I get a very sizable bonus based on my actual productivity. I really feel that I received more benefits from the contract than they did.

WHIZZARD: Do you work for more than one editor at DC?

GIORDANO: I think I've worked for all of them at one time or another. Primarily, I've worked for Len Wein, Paul Levitz, Julie Schwartz, and Jack Harris. My liason there is Paul Levitz and whatever work I get there filters through his office. As editorial coordinator he's responsible for keeping me and everyone else happy.

WHIZZARD: How soon did you start working on other material after you stepped down as editor?

GIORDANO: When I left New York I started working immediately.

When I gave notice Carmine was hesitant to accept it but he said he would like to see me continue working for them. My working schedule was actually set up before I left. I gave notice in September and left in November. In the meantime I was able to clean up my office, get all my books up to date, and the editors were able to establish a schedule for me so I wouldn't have time off.

WHIZZARD: During your comics career have you always lived in Connecticut?

GIORDANO: I was born in New York City but I moved to Connecticut in 1957. I've lived here for 23 years.

WHIZZARD: Are the companies becoming more recpetive to workers living outside of New York?

GIORDANO: That's only a problem when originally establishing credentials with a company. John Byrne lives in Canada. Don Newton is in Arizona. There's never been any real problem. Jim Aparo makes a trip to New York once every five years.

WHIZZARD: Why did you choose to work on *Aquaman* again?

GIORDANO: I suppose I was motivated by nostalgia as much as anything else.

It's kind of a long story. At DC I probably do twice as much work as anyone sees. I'm heavily involved in their licensing division which is responsible for 60 or 70 percent of my annual income and it's also, for the most part, dull (laughter). My approach to it is, "Paul, I love the stuff, I like making the money, but I'm really bored. Could you give me something I would be more interested in?" Paul soon realized I wouldn't be happy until I had a feature of my own to do so we settled on *Aquaman*.

WHIZZARD: How long have you known Neal Adams?

GIORDANO: All my life (laughter). I met Neal when I started working as an editor for DC. We developed a very good relationship which I think still exists today.

WHIZZARD: How does your company Dikart differ from Continuity?

GIORDANO: I have a similar operation like Continuity but it's much smaller and much more restricted in the kind of material I do. All my work is comic oriented. I try not to do the kind of things that were being done at Continuity. I personally would rather not do advertising.

I do a great deal of work for DC's licensing division. Any artwork to be sold to a client, which hasn't already been printed, I get to do that artwork.

WHIZZARD: Do you get paid every time the same illustration is used for different merchandising?

GIORDANO: Usually, that's just between the company and the client. However, from my own standpoint, I've made so much money through licensing these past few years that I really wouldn't have time to do any more art anyway. I would have liked to have gotten a small rate for the material that I had done previously that has been used for other material.

WHIZZARD: Who is Dikart?

GIORDANO: It's only me. I turned it into a corporation because otherwise I would have to pay tremendous taxes.

WHIZZARD: Dikart is not synonymous with Quickdraw?

GIORDANO: Quickdraw is something different entirely. That's a secondary group that Frank [McLaughlin] and I are involved with together.

WHIZZARD: Did you have a specific role in Crusty Bunkers?

GIORDANO: As a matter of fact, the most specific role I had was deciding what to pay the various people that worked on it.

The work that had to be done just went to the person most suited for a particular job. In some cases running a job is just as important as doing it. I guess that's what I do with Dikart and Quickdraw: I find the right people to do the jobs that I can't do myself. I work seven days a week, but I don't work 12 hours a day. There rarely is any time in my schedule for anything more than I've already committed myself to. The next thing is finding a way to get the work done.

A lot of Crusty Bunkers was done during the evening. I had to catch a train at five to go home. There would be a lot of social traffic at Continuity that went through after that time. Gray Morrow would drop in at seven to say hello and Neal would say, "Sit down and ink a panel." That's how Crusty Bunkers was formed. Anyone who wanted to come in and use the facilities—the library, the equipment—was welcome to do so but there would be a time for repaying that generosity. They would have to ink a panel. Whatever wasn't done by somebody else, I would do.

I think on one of Chaykin's books [*Sword & Sorcery*] about fifteen people had a hand in there.

WHIZZARD: It's been said that a lot of people, such as Terry Austin and Klaus Janson, studied under you. How would you describe that training?

GIORDANO: They were very kind to me. I have to admit that although I am in control of everything I do much of it is not planned. I work by instinct and I deal with people that way too. A lot of people give me credit for teaching them things that I didn't teach them.

I gave Terry a chance to work when he came to New York City. Neal Adams and I looked at his stuff and we said, "Thanks, we'll give you a call." I found myself thinking, "Hey, how 'bout that kid who came up a couple of weeks ago?" We called him and invited him to work at the studio.

I suppose Terry asked questions during that first year or two and I'm sure I answered them as honestly as I could. For the most part, he learned all by himself. I didn't look over his shoulder and say, "No, don't do it that way, do it this way." I never made any kind of criticism at all unless I was asked to.

Incidentally, I have done some teaching and I am still teaching. I taught at Joe Kubert's school. I still teach at Parson's School of Design in New York which, in my opinion, is one of the best schools in the world. Starting in September, I'll be teaching three hours a week.

WHIZZARD: What were your specific duties as a board member of the American Comic Book Academy?

GIORDANO: I was on the Board of Governors on the Academy along with Neal [Adams] and we tried to get the people in the business to feel responsible for one another—as well as themselves, to have a common purpose, and to speak with one another and find out the problems they've had. I think to that end we've made a very valuable contribution.

The problem with ACBA and the Guild is that we never could get anyone to think in the same direction. I think the force would have been something like a tidal wave if we could have gotten everyone to think in the same direction.

Through the efforts of the Academy we are now being faced with proposals which we have never been faced with before that time.

"IT'S SOMETHING I LOOK BACK ON WITH A GREAT DEAL OF PRIDE, NOT NECESSARILY BECAUSE THE RESULTS WERE SO GREAT BUT BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT I WAS ABLE TO DO IT AT ALL."

WHIZZARD: Is that an accomplishment of the Academy or the Guild?

GIORDANO: That was the Academy. The Guild never has functioned. The fact is that no one has done anything. When the Guild was formed it was found that we needed someone to do things full-time. The people who naturally find themselves on the Board of Governors or organizations like that are almost always the people who are the busiest in the business. The Board of Governors on the Academy consisted of Stan Lee, Neal Adams, Roy Thomas and myself. Just trying to get everybody together for a Board of Governors' meeting was a problem. To go beyond that was impossible.

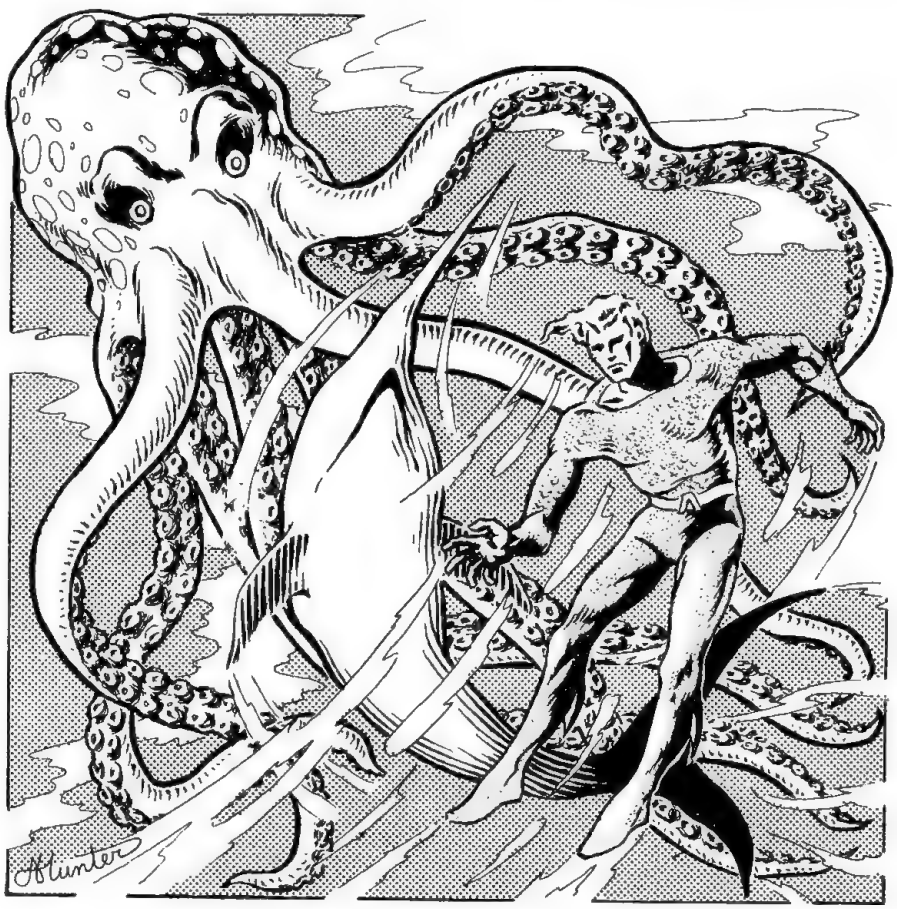
The Guild had the same problem. The Guild had to be formed, it had to function, it had to make demands. There was just nobody to make that happen.

WHIZZARD: Where you involved with Bernard Krigstein's Society of Comic Book Illustrators?

GIORDANO: I was a card carrying member (laughter). That was my first excursion into organized comic artist fights. I joined that and I paid my dues. There, as with the Academy, there were different viewpoints expressed that tore the group apart. Comic book artists are a very strange breed. You really need to be one to understand it.

Neal described comic artists rather humorously as people who sit in a closet and a person slips pages under the door and the artist picks up the pages and does it. When he's done he slips it back out under the door and the person on the other side takes it and slips him some more stuff. That might be an exaggeration but only a slight one. Comic book artists are for the most part insulated from the real world.

They really have, for the most part, no idea of what good buisness is. They may be very creative people, but they don't think of themselves as businessmen, which indeed they are. They are required to pay



government taxes as businessmen and file forms as businessmen, but they don't think of themselves that way. As a result, they allow themselves to be exploited.

It's very often because they lack the knowledge of bargaining for something they've already earned. There are copyright laws which many people in the business aren't familiar with. Unless they ask or demand for these rights they're not going to get them because no one is going to volunteer. It's highly unlikely that you will go down to your IRS office on April 15th unless someone hits you over the head and says, "You got to do it."

WHIZZARD: Has DC returned all of your original art?
GIORDANO: DC seems intended to give me back every damn thing I've done for them (laughter). I get regular care packages from them. Some of them are things which I forgot I did. Every once in awhile I come up with an envelop of something I did ten years ago. They give it all back.

WHIZZARD: Is it true that Charlton shredded all original artwork?
GIORDANO: Isn't that a same? That is true. I wish some of that was still available. I consider that still some of the finest work I've done.

WHIZZARD: Didn't you do a *Popular Mechanics* cover?
GIORDANO: You keep up on things, don't you? (laughter) That was several years ago.

I also did one for *CB Buyers' Guide*. Recently, I did a cover for a magazine you're not very likely to see called *Institutional Investors*. It's for people that invest in institutions like the Ford Foundation. The magazine is limited to subscription from corporations. The minimum listing for closed sales is $20 million a year. I did a comic book type cover and a comic book page inside. So I guess even the stuffy old birds have gotten into comics.
WHIZZARD: Will you be doing anything for *Epic Illustrated* or *Heavy Metal*?
GIORDANO: I've been asked to do something for *Epic* but I've never been approached for *Heavy Metal*. Then again, those are not assignments. You sit down and do something you've always wanted to do and if they like it they'll buy it.
WHIZZARD: Did your Kym story (*Witzend* 10) and your Stephanie Starr story [*Star*Reach*] happen in that way?
GIORDANO: No, those were commissioned. In both cases I was approached with those specific projects, yet I still own the copyright on both stories.

With something like *Epic* you come up with the storyline and provide your own material. You can borrow one of their letterers or colorists but you'll have to pay for it. I'd like to do it, but again, I just don't have the time.
WHIZZARD: Among other people's comic work, do you have any personal favorites?
GIORDANO: I have to admit a prejudice for Neal not only because I've worked with him so often, but Neal, more than anyone else I know, cares about what he does. I can't think of any other artist in this business that cares so much about what he does. Neal very rarely, if ever, compromises the job because of deadlines even though the editor and the publisher are screaming. He spends his time on the material that he thinks it really needs.

He takes on more than he should. Very often it's in an effort to help someone out, or to do a job that he wants to do and can't pass up.

He has no false status. There are times when he knows he can do the job better than anyone else and he'll say so. He'll often think that it's more important that the job be done right than for him to consider the deadline problems and all the other things which he's committed himself to.
WHIZZARD: What comics did you read as a child?
GIORDANO: Batman was probably the first one I read regularly. It's probably why I got into comics. *Famous Funnies* was the first one I looked at. The one that first got to me, though, was *Batman* even though I read *Superman* earlier. As a kid those things frightened the hell out of me...I bought everything that was available at that time. I wish I had saved some of the early DCs.
WHIZZARD: Do you still own any of those books?
GIORDANO: (sigh) No. I traded them all away. At the time, no one thought they'd be worth anything.
WHIZZARD: Did you pick up any of the EC books?
GIORDANO: I picked up *Weird Science* and *Weird Science Fantasy* and they were probably the best comic books ever published in the world. I loved those two. I couldn't wait each month. I was working professionally at the time and here I was waiting at the newsstand.

The horror comics were well written and well drawn and although the subject matter wasn't my favorite, I bought all those too. I thought the war comics and the science fiction comics were the best. Even after the code they proved they didn't need to have blood and guts shock value to have a good story.

I was very impressed with them but I made no attempt to get any work there because I knew I couldn't obtain that type of quality at that time. I just wasn't ready for it. I just knew I wasn't good enough. As a matter of fact, I was very happy to get work at Charlton at that time.

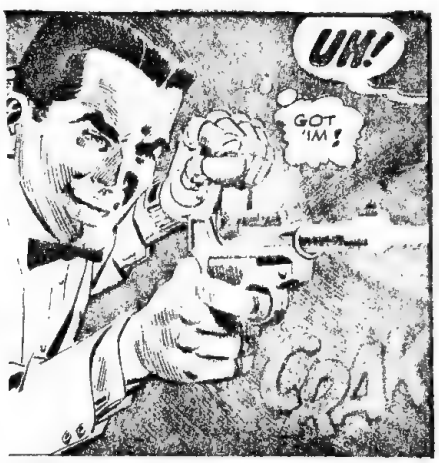
I suppose there were a lot of people who would have approached EC but you got the feeling without talking to anybody that it was a closed shop. Every magazine would have the same people in it; there rarely was a newcomer. They really scared you off.

I would not have considered going there until about five years ago had they still been in business. Five years ago I might have thought I was worthy.
WHIZZARD: Who would you say are your major artistic influences?
GIORDANO: I have to admit that my main influence right now is Neal Adams but that's because we've been working together for five years and we had a house style. The house style was Neal Adams' style.

If you remember before I worked with Neal my style on *Wonder Woman* was loose and crisp. That was the direction I was heading toward. It was a fast style and one that suited my personality at the time. On the other hand, Neal's style is controlled and requires controlled rendering where the shape and the quality of the line is just as important as where it is placed and the angle where the crossing goes. There is nothing left to chance.

I still haven't gone back to that fast style I used to have working with Mike Sekowsky and some others on the romance magazines. It had a nice crisp commercial life-like look to it without all of the heavy rendering. Someday I'll get back to it. I'm heading back toward that but it's very difficult to give up five years of habit.
WHIZZARD: What was your first pencil job?
GIORDANO: I did a one page pinup called "The Hound of the Baskervilles." It had four panels and it took me *all* day (laughter).
WHIZZARD: In the comic industry you've worked for several companies in various positions. Which have you enjoyed most?
GIORDANO: Obviously I didn't like being an assistant editor. Who likes being an assistant anything? I liked being in charge of the whole shooting line (laughter).

In terms of creativity I suppose what I did at Charlton was the most outstanding, not so much because I had control but because I had absolutely nothing to work with. Whatever I did there *I* did, where at DC I had all kinds of things available to me and people backing me up which made things easier. Although the books at DC were sharper and better produced than at Charlton that was less due to my personal effort. I would have to say I enjoyed the work at Charlton more because *I* did it. It's something I look back on with a great deal of pride, not necessarily because the results were so great but because of the fact that I was able to do it at all. □



SARGE STEEL:: Dick Giordano's popular Charlton hero. (© 1967 Charlton Comics Group)

PAUL GULACY

[*from page 9*] Plus there's already an abundance of marvelous directors. At this point in my life I just don't feel like going to film school but I would like to get involved with film one way or another.

WHIZZARD: Since you model your characters after movie actors, do you ever pattern your artistic style after a specific director?

GULACY: No. I will steal various techniques from various directors from movies that I remember and incorporate them into the comic. There's a lot of techniques that I use that are used over and over again, even on television. It's just my approach. I have notes and notes of things.

For example, there's a scene in "Blood on Black Satin" where the girl was on the altar. I started panning at the bottom of the altar with a very close shot of the rats and the cobwebs. It goes along the engraving on the side of the altar and finally we get to the girl's shoulder and her breast and we see this profile of her laying on the altar. There's flames in the background. Finally it opens to the full scene.

It's a technique that John Ford had always used. The camera would always pan up the mountain side and when you get to the peak of the mountain you would see smoke. The scene would open up when the camera goes above the mountain to a village of Indians. Those kind of things I grab onto and incorporate into the comics.

WHIZZARD: Do you consider film art?

GULACY: Yes. It's an abused art form. Look at the $30 million spent on *The Blues Brothers*. You could reconstruct a ghetto in a major city for that amount of money and they wasted it.

WHIZZARD: Do you consider comics art?

GULACY: No, it's not art. It's just drawings created for entertainment purposes.

WHIZZARD: Is there room for art in mainstream comics?

GULACY: There's no room for it. Though it's not an improbability.

WHIZZARD: In your opinion, can comics accomplish storytelling?

GULACY: Of course.

WHIZZARD: Isn't storytelling also the object of film?

GULACY: Yes, but film can also move people emotionally. That's what art is.

Also, there's acting in film. There's an art of conveying emotions across celluoid to affect people. That's what makes acting an art form.

Charles Shultz has the ability to make people happy with very simple lines. He's creating art without ten million lines.

There are certain artistic ways to look at comics as far as storytelling. If I moved somebody then it can be considered art. But I'm not a true artist. I'm an interpretative artist. Many people who draw comics are clever draftsman, but they're not artists.

WHIZZARD: It's the medium itself that won't convey the art?

GULACY: That's right.

WHIZZARD: What comic story do you feel has achieved the best storytelling?

GULACY: There are a lot of stories that achieved good storytelling. For example, the little horror story that Steranko did in *Tower of Shadows* 1 was probably the closest to perfect graphic storytelling.

But it's nothing new. He wasn't breaking new ground as far as the story itself. That's what makes it flawed. There's nothing terribly unique about it. It's something we've read and seen in movies a hundred times over.

WHIZZARD: Art can only be a first time thing?

GULACY: Art can only be a first time experience in the eye of the beholder.

WHIZZARD: What projects will you be doing in the near future?

GULACY: Right now I'm doing a lot of things outside the industry. Currently, I'm storyboarding a film for an industrial firm in New Jersey.

I'd like to do a Conan story sometime for *Savage Sword* someday.

Roy called me not long ago to discuss a story about the suicide of Robert E. Howard. All of these flashes came to mind of how I would do the prairie, the dust blowing, the shack where he lived, and the whole atmosphere. Hitchcock and Ford were coming into mind right away. When I got the plotline it wasn't what I expected. Since then, they've given it to Gil Kane.

WHIZZARD: Do you have any plans for portfolios?

GULACY: I'm tired of looking at portfolios. I'd like to just wait and accumulate my art and put it together in a book directed toward fandom.

WHIZZARD: Did you have any involvement in the comics guild?

GULACY: No.

I belong to an organization called the Graphic Artists' Guild, which covers all aspects of commercial art. Actually, you don't need a comic guild because any problem that an artist would confront at a comics company could be dealt with through the Guild. If its legal advice or lawyer's fees the Graphic Artists' Guild would provide it.

WHIZZARD: How long has that organization existed?

GULACY: I believe it's been around for about ten years now. I've been a member for three years. The main headquarters is in New York, but there are provisions to assist companies all around the country.

WHIZZARD: Have you ever spoken to any of your contemporaries about this?

GULACY: It's such a fragmented industry. Since most of the writers and artists are freelance its hard to unite these people. Writers would have to join a Writers' Guild. If comics artists were wise, and I'm sure artists in New York must know about it, they'd join up.

WHIZZARD: Would it protect people who signed Marvel's work-for-hire clause?

GULACY: No. But I personally feel if I do an *Avengers* story I have no right to do an *Avengers* story anywhere else. That's Marvel's property. Stan Lee created those characters and it's Marvel's. I have no rights to that whatsoever. That does not belong to me.

That's why Marvel created *Epic*, to give artists the opportunity to retian the rights to their material.

It's just not the comics people that suffer. It's people who do fashion, textile designs, all variations of advertising and commercial artwork. They have always been the peons, the lackeys. Finally, we're getting organized.It's finally being done.□

Small Talk...

still being praised as comics at their best. And only afew months after Axis powers had seized Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Albania Siegal and Shuster had sold their first significant comics story about a hero in red and blue underwear. Surely, what's good for Superman is good for America.

Besides that, many characters have a natural dependency on the war setting, such as *Blackhawks*, *Boy Commandos* or *Sgt. Fury*. It just wouldn't be the same if Captain America hunted down Manhattan muggers.

Increased Middle East instability, calls for larger nuclear stockpiles, and Marvel's preparation of special books for their specialty shop market surely cannot be mere coincidence. Hopefully this new Copper Age of comics will foment increased content, instead of simply increased price tags. Admittedly, Mr. Average is probably more familiar with *King Kong* than *King Lear* but certainly complex stories can be catered to as well. Even with television, at one time, there was room for *The Prisoner* as well as shows like *Dukes of Hazzard*. Yet comics, like modern television, are running the risk of mass-marketing themselves out of existence where they are offenseless to everyone and interesting to no one.

What this country really needs is a president who is not a spineless coward: one who is willing to press the button and put an end to the arms race once and for all. After all, our "precious bodily fluids" have to be saved. Sure a few million people will kick the bucket. But that's a very small price to pay to make *Richie Rich* a household word.

It is with some regret, and some relief, to announce that this may be the last issue of *Whizzard*. During the past few issues, it's become increasingly difficult to accomodate the financial and time committments that producing *Whizzard* demands. Secondly, it's a never-ending aggravation dealing with people who promise contributions they have no intention of doing: this issue was delayed by three such nonexistant articles and two interviews which fell through. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, *Whizzard* has become recognized as a significant comics-oriented magazine while my own interest in mainstream comics has considerably waned. It is difficult to justify producing a magazine devoted to a field that is less than totally exciting. Perhaps *Whizzard* will return with a somewhat different focus, but not in the immediate future. After eight years of publishing, it's time to move into something else. □

SHOOTING DOWN THE BATTLESTAR:

By Cathy Olish

With the release of issue number 23, the Marvel Comics series **Battlestar Galactica** has been cancelled, thus ending the third attempt to get this space age Wagon Train off the financial ground. As both television shows were axed due to bad Nielson ratings, so was the comic series felled by lack of sales.

Coming as it did on the heels of **Star Wars**, **Galactica** was created essentially to capitalize on the phenomenal success of its blockbusting predecessor. There was a lot of painfully obvious similarities, but had it been given proper care and quality scripts, the last surviving battlestar might conceivably have roamed the galaxy for years. As it turned out, however, **Galactica** became a 'hardware' show, and was plagued by scripting problems that were carried over not only to the second television show, **Galactica 1980**, but to the comic book as well.

Whenever a movie or television series is adapted to comic book form, the first issues are, for the most part, already written, chronicling the pilot episode for those that did not see the television series. In a sense, continuing such a saga beyond the parent episodes can be much more demanding than scripting other types of series, because so much of the framework, such as characters, setting, etc., has already been decided by the creator. To work within these given limitations and at the same time inject one's own ideas can be strain on the ingenuity of any writer, especially when each writer has a different interpretation on how he feels each character should think and act. Conflicts between the original and adaptation arise, producing a considerable amount of confusion for the reader.

Battlestar Galactica was afflicted with many such discrepancies, the comic series inheriting a lot from the television shows. The differences in some of the characters, terminology and technology between the Marvel Comics and Glen Larson and Robert Thurston paperbacks was more than a little bewildering. What was right or correct in one series wasn't always right in the other two. Some of the characters were done quite well in the comic, but others loaded with potential fell just inches short of what they could have been. Marvel came closest to the original characters as depicted by Larson and Thurston, but ran out of time before they could complete the transformation from images into flesh-and-blood characters.

Commander Adama was one of the better written characters. Consciously or unconsciously, he was Lorne Greene all the way: the loving father, indulgent grandfather, but ever wise and vigilant commander, the patriarch of his race. The Biblical reference (Adam-Adama) was woven in neatly, but he could have had a little more personal contact with his family.

Colonel Tigh seems to be a forgotten man. He is supposed to be Adama's right hand, yet for the most part he is there only to have Adama explain things to him, and thus to the reader. He did get a chance to go into action in issue number 7, while Adama was trapped in the Memory Machine, but was never really allowed to develop a personality of his own.

Captain Apollo was portrayed as a strong man, very much his father's son, but he had an always-in-command quality that tended to make him a little pompous. He was overused, taking a major role in almost every issue, to the exclusion of strong supporting characters like Boomer and Athena. The Memory Machine sequence is a good example of this. Apollo dominated the issue, shoving Athena, who should have had a strong role, into a bit part. After all, Adama is her father, too, and she is a warrior. She should have been very much in evidence.

Throughout the early issues, Apollo's character seemed to have been based solely upon the always-in-command quality. True, he is an important character, but if the reader is to feel for the character, the character has to be a feeling being himself. Family contact was meager; there seemed to be little or no brother-sister relationship between Apollo and Athena until issue 17 and 18, and yet, when he frees her from Dr. Enoch, he didn't even ask her if she was all right, which seems the most natural thing in the world for him to do. Boxey, his son, is conspicuous by his absence until issue 14.

Walt Simonson took full charge of the scripting chores with issue number 19, and it was he who turned this mere figure into a human being. The sequence with Boxey and Adama was long overdue, a bit of literary brilliance that practically stole the show. He seemed relaxed for the first time, and it went over very well. Issue 21 completed the transformation when Apollo and Starbuck had to rescue Athena; he was a typical big brother protecting little sister, whether she needed it or not. This new attitude gave a promise of interesting things to come, had the series not been cancelled so abruptly.

Lieutenant Starbuck, being the cast clown, was given some of the best lines. The early issues, however, seemed to base his character on his gambling, his cigars (how he could smoke cigars with his helmet on is beyond me), and his roving eye for the ladies. It wasn't until the Scavenge World sequence that we got a glimpse of the man behind the facade.

Starbuck is a much more complicated character than his image warrants, and the concentration upon so few character traits hindered the development of the real warrior. Brash, impulsive, and resistant to authority as the young man may be, he is still a highly trained combat warrior, with a good head on his shoulders, and more sense that given credit for. He is also devious with a capital D, and he has charm he hasn't even used yet, a somewhat more happy-go-lucky Han Solo, but his considerable talent as a con artist was downplayed, except for various encounters with Athena, Cassiopeia, and Queen Eurayle, Empress of Scavenge World.

Walt Simonson provided tantalizing peeks at the serious side of this rollicking space cowboy by stranding him on Scavenge World. Starbuck is the embodiment of freedom; it is his soul, engrained in his very being. Take that away, whether it be the freedom to roam the stars, or freedom from domestic ties, and you have only a shadow of a man remaining. He cannot live in a cage, no matter how gilded; he may exist, but he won't live.

Part of Starbuck's trademark is to never show what he is feeling, but issue 21 caught him off guard. His reaction to Athena's action was surprising; one expected more compassion for Athena from him. Queen Eurayle caught him in a rare moment of honesty, thinly disguised by flippancy, when he tells her that he is no good for her.It's regrettable that he did not show some of the same honesty with Athena and Cassopeia; he does care for them both deeply, but he refused to come out and admit it, because he knows in his heart that he will never settle down with

any one woman. He was growing with every issue, but the unlimited potential of this character is now unfortunately limited to the paperbacks.

Lieutenant Boomer is a sore subject, because he is such a strong character and was so badly neglected that it's a wonder we saw him at all. Originally, Boomer was Starbuck's best friend, wingman, confidant, and often his conscience, too. He knew the man inside and out, and it was frequently through Boomer that we caught glimpses of the real Starbuck. Apollo, besides being the commander's son, was a little older and a rank ahead of the two lieutenants, and because of this, they didn't always see eye to eye. Then, suddenly, Apollo and Starbuck were paired, with Boomer shoved out into the cold. To say that such a move was disappointing would be an understatement; Boomer can hold his own in any situation, and he is the perfect counterbalance to the flashy, headstrong Starbuck and the often stiff and distant Apollo.

Outside of the direct adaptations from the paperbacks, Boomer was seen only in bit parts, and many of those were out of character for him. Issue 15, however, introduced us to the real Boomer. Always cool and confident, Boomer epitomizes the courage and skill of Galactica's warrior class, but this is tempered by a boundless compassion for other people, and an intuitive understanding of what makes them tick. The moving scene with Illya brought Boomer to his peak in this series.

Athena has been ruthlessly ignored since the beginning. The commander's daughter is an independent, strong, and spirited woman, but outside of bit parts on the bridge, she was used solely as an object for Starbuck's affection. Issue 17 got her off the bridge and into a viper training as a combat pilot, but this was spoiled by inaccuracy. First, Athena's rank has never been fully clarified, and second, she is a fully trained, highly skilled combat pilot. Her courage came to the forefront in this sequence, but there is more to Athena than that.

Athena's feelings about the people around her and the events of the series have never been explored, and that is a needless waste. Her relationship with Starbuck was shown from his side only. How did she feel about him? Did she really understand him? Did he understand her? Did he try to? Did she ever consider getting involved with one of the other pilots? All these things kept her from achieving her true potential.

Issue 21 was long overdue for Athena. For the first time she actually felt something, not only compassion for Res, but doubts about whether she had done the right thing. That was the best characterization of Athena on any of the three series.

Jolly came into the spotlight in the last two issues, and here Simonson has a lot more to work with because nothing was known about Jolly except for his physical size. Putting Jolly undercover to find the food black marketeers was an ingenious idea, and linking him up with Medea was totally delightful.

The rest of the cast of **Battlestar Galactica** got cameos at best. Cassiopeia, besides having her name spelled a variety of ways, was never settled completely into one position. In the short run of the comic series, she was seen as a socialator, a med tech of sorts, and a viper pilot. Boxey, who continued to improve with every issue he appeared in, was missing through much of the series, but an engaging character at the end. Lucifer, Boltar's right hand...ah... computer, was glaringly absent; he is one of the more charming villains in the Marvel collection.

The artwork was probably the single greatest liability to the comic book. The early issues had an angular, distorted quality, and were plagued by a great many errors, especially with color plates. Apollo suffered the most from color; he was alternately black, white, blond, brunette, and once even had sort of red-brown hair. The later issues were right on target; as the artists and the inkers got more experience working together with this type of magazine, the art improved 100%.

The scripting on this book was unimpressive during the early issues. Issue 15 was probably the best single issue of the series, because the story was complete, with no noticeable errors, and told in such a manner that one really felt for the characters. For the first time, they were full human beings, shedding the plastic, unreal quality that had been present during the first issues.

There were a number of unanswered questions during the series which hindered otherwise good stories. During the Scavenge World sequence, it was never explained why Starbuck alone was immune to Queen Eurayle's mind powers. Starbuck's lack of honesty with the ladies was disappointing. Certainly, he would never settle down with one woman, but telling each of them that she was the only one that he had ever loved seemed a bit callous, although the fact that Cassiopeia saw right through him was enjoyable.

Issue 12 was the turning point as far as the scripting went. The Scavenge World saga was a good story despite omissions. The alien's words repeated over and over in Starbuck's mind when he agreed to stay with Eurayle was a very good touch, and did more to portray what Starbuck was feeling than anything else.

"Derelict" and "Berserker", issues 15 and 16, were totally opposite fillers. "Derelict" was a masterpiece; "Berserker" was exceedingly, even laughingly, dull. A Cylon master gunman? Come on now! Face it, the nameless man in the pancho he's not.

Walt Simonson took over with issue 19, and the series went straight up. Starbuck's return, coupled with Eurayle's pursuit, was surprising with the light and flowing movement, the characterization of Eurayle, and the amount of feeling on Apollo's part. "Scavenge World" was probably the best complete story of the series, and Simonson's ending really set it off.

Starbuck and Apollo got a much needed rest in the last two issues, but for some reason Apollo was still dragged in on the wrap-up when he should have been spending more time with his son. Jolly stole the show, and the plot was a down-home, within-the-fleet, honest to goodness human problem. Simonson's touch with irony was beautifully played; the name of the ship, and the fact that they were left stranded was appreciated.

All in all, **Battlestar Galactica** was probably the most improved book in the Marvel lineup, especially considering its limited run. The writing was far superior to the television show as far as the plots go, although they were a bit lax in dealing with the pilots as people. In a time of war, of instant death, not one pilot asked another if he or she was all right, not even Starbuck, who walked away from a supposedly "inescapable" crash without a scratch.

Galactica was a wonderful dream. The potential was unlimited, and it turned attention once again to the stars, and to a unity of man that we can only hope will come years in the future. It was a story of man striving to live, with a spirit that cannot be quenched by anything. It will be missed. □

KENN THOMAS' WHITHER AND WHITHER FANDOM?

By Kenn Thomas

At a recent science-fiction convention in St. Louis, **Heavy Metal** editor Ted White made some interesting observations about the prospects of the American comics medium in the near future. He noted a similarity betwen the state of comics today and that of science-fiction pulps during their transition from the large, popular magazines of the forties to the small, esoteric journals they have become. White suggests a parallel in that comics are now becoming smaller, more expensive and have developed a more esoteric audience as evidenced by the growing number of comics specialty shops around the country. Soon, says White, the medium will dwindle to a situation of small magazines read by a small but stable audience.

Despite talk of comics as the literature of workers and of students, White's ideas have a ring of truth about them. Price and product are pushing the kids and the mildly interested out of the comics world. Today, only people with a strong attachment to the medium are willing to pay the vast amount of money asked for quality wares. Even as the standard, now 50 cents, comic book becomes more inaccessible price-wse, higher priced magazines like **Epic Illustrated** and **Heavy Metal** have become staples in the diet of the reasonably well-read comics fan. As further evidence, the fanzine market has ballooned from great numers of small-circulation amateur magazines to a few, near professional journals with large numbers of readers. Prices here, too, have escalated.

In short, the average comic book reader spends a lot more for comics and for fanzines than he or she did six or eight years ago. This necessarily means the audience is becoming more esoteric, more privately aware, and theoretically more demanding. Fans only dreamed of this situation years ago: comic readership trimmed to the point where people with knowledge about good comics (those willing to spend money for them) have economic muscle.

So why aren't comics getting any better?

In terms of format, as mentioned, things have improved considerably. Different color processing, better paper and book binding are all available for a price. Aesthetically, however, comics have been mired in mediocrity ever since Jack Kirby left the medium, with important exceptions. The most popular new comic with the fan crowd, **X-Men**, ranks among the most banal comics in history with regard to writing and only mildly superior with regard to art. **Micronauts** remains readable, entertaining and nice to look at but wholly unimportant. Even slick, color magazines are as likely to be adaptations of **Jaws II** as they are to be work by Al Williamson. Either way, the slicks inevitably contain second-rate movie renderings. **Heavy Metal** obscurity only fools the blacklight crowd and **Epic Illustrated** has yet to really deliver. If fans are indeed consolidating to maintain a respectable, elite audience for the industry, as the evidence suggests, why do they not improve the standard of the product?

Obviously, one of the reasons rests with the fact that the industry does not look at it that way. They still desparately scramble for the kid audience that allows them to get away with publishing dogshit and Bozo and selling it. They manage this with intra-media exploitation (**She-Hulk** comics and myriads of first-issues that make kids feel like collectors) and inter-media dependancies: T.V. tie-ins, movie adaptations newspaper strips, toys and cartoons. The way Marvel responds to the new economic muscle of the fans is to take ads out in **Variety** licensing properties and to open its own animation studio. If the fans stop buying it, Marvel will pedal its dumbness elsewhere.

This reflects a misunderstanding on the part of the companies, not a malicious attitude. When **Micronauts** first appeared, Marvel presumed its success was due to the immense popularity of the toys, not any level of quality it might have attained. The kids made it popular, not the fans. In contradition to this assumption, however when **Shogun Warriors** appeared, it bombed even though these toys were also quite popular. **X-Men**, Marvel's most popular comic in fan circles and one of its better selling titles, has absolutely no inter-media dependancy. As can best be determined, old favorites like **Superman** and **Spiderman** are retained only because of their licensing value, not their sales popularity. Marketing techniques and a desire to exponentially increase profits by broadening the audience has blinded the companies to the wants or even the make-up of its real audience. The mandate of the new economic muscle exists but the companies do not believe (or do not want to believe) that therein is their true market. To acknowledge the fans more would mean restricting the possibilities of the large kid audience, something the corporations could not allow.

The problem goes back quite a way; what's good for business is bad for art. Radio programmers turned rock-n-roll music into MOR blandness with their psychological audience profiles and market surveys. When it became apparent that special effects could draw a crowd, substance in film went out with the bathwater. The advent of the mini-series caused good weekly television programs to disappear. Market manipulation is clearly nothing new to the American popular culture.

A lesson hides behind this painful history, however, one that comic companies may well learn. Record sales today plummet alarmingly throughout the music business. Hollywood box office reads down twenty percent this summer and declining. Network television, for a number of reasons, is fast becoming non-existant. The broad markets are not as stable as once thought and in many cases they have gained short-term profit growth with long-term disaster. Marvel's animation studio could become a great liability if their cartoons fail in competition with **Space Ghost**, the **Flintstones** and other formidable opposition. Will the company be able to fall back on its comics line? Not without the small, stable audience White described. If **Superman II** does a nose-dive at the theatres, can DC still look forward to a comfortable position in the Warner Communications hierarchy? Again, not without that good sized, old-time fan audience.

Some evidence suggests that the companies know they can only go so far in alienating the fans. Reports circulate regularly concerning limited editions of a quality **Batman** produced by DC for distribution solely in comics novelty shops or something similar with the **Legion of Superheores**. Talk continues about a special printing from Marvel of Kirby's **Prisoner**, available also only through the comic stores. The reading public has yet to see fruition of these projects but they indicate at least a nominal awareness by the companies of the economic importance the devotees of the medium have gained.

If, indeed, enthusiasts do manage recognition of their leverage with the capitalist tool, another question will become quite important: will the fans necessarily push for the creation of better comics? If sales figures, of both back and current issues, conversation and articles in the **Comics Journal** indicate anything, **X-Men** is the ideal of modern comics fans, the comic worth talking about. Outside of some rather slick but well-drawn artwork, **X-Men** is really quite ordinary. Yet, copies of the first annual issue of the **new** X-Men now sell for forty dollars to collectors. Three months do not go by when the X-Men do not figure prominently on a fanzine cover.

If comics companies have an obligation to consider the fans, the fans have an obligation to consider the art. With the vast improvements of the circulation and technical qualities of fanzine, some effort should be made to improve the quality of fan criticism and general knowledge and awareness about the medium. Fan

publishers reap the benefits of the new economic muscle by pouring money into color covers and distribution but have been slow in producing quality, analytical articles or research. To be sure, a lot more this goes on now than in the past. Considering the position of the contemporary fan, however, a lot more needs doing.

For all the criticism **The Comics Journal** receives about pedantry and pomposity, precious little of that exists. How can contributors to this fanzine be pedants when, in fact, they rarely show their expertise about comics in their writing, merely their opinion? Whenever knowledge about the medium is revealed, it is through a transcribed tape from an interview source. Rather, the **Comics Journal** looks upon itself as the **Sixty Minutes** of the comic medium. It digs for controversy, real or imagined, with an often stingingly self-conscious pugnaciousness, as if this were the major, if not only aspect of a magazine. (On should think they flirted with a plagiarism lawsuit from **Mother Jones** when they printed a "Hell-Raising Interview With Harlan Ellison.") Pedants they are not, punks they are.

No one credibly denies that the **Comics Journal** is an excellent fanzine. It has, indeed, improved fanzine standards by enormous measure from their previous low technical **and** aesthetic criterion. Yet, background articles on old titles are generally absent from the fanzine as are even references to quality information source material. Important functions remain: news reporting, interviews, et cetera, but much is left out and much is worthless: pages of empty criticism of the **X-Men** for lacking depth of character, recapitulations of the career of the **Ghost Rider** and so on. Where are the articles on the strength and weaknesses of the original **X-Men** series by Lee, Kirby and Reinman? What about the history of **THUNDER Agents**? If one cannot find these things in the **Comics Journal**, where does one look? Fanzines were never big enough in the past to cover the subjects adequately. Now the opportunity exists to explore the roots, the causes and effects of the medium on a regular basis and it should be done more effectively.

Also conspicuously absent from all but dealer ads in fanzines are articles concerning modern preservation techniques. Naivete can be offered as an excuse as to why early fanzines ignored the subject but certainly the resources of present-day fanzines could successfully investigate the effectiveness of Wei'to de-acidifier mists or report on the usefulness of various kinds of Hollinger boxes to store collections.)

> "X-MEN, RANKS AMONG THE MOST BANAL COMICS IN HISTORY WITH REGARD TO WRITING AND ONLY MILDLY SUPERIOR WITH REGARD TO ART."

The Comics Journal does contain many thoughtful articles of depth and consideration but the impression remains that its contributors concerned more with entertaining themselves with each other's opinions than doing the real research and applying it against what is being published today. Nevertheless, **The Comics Journal** is the best contemporary fanzine, despite its problems. **The Comic Reader** maintains a marginal relevance because of the comic strips it prints, not for its articles and certainly not for its news. Despite many years of practice, **RBCC** stays woefully disorganized. **Comics Feature** still sells but has yet to distinguish itself as anything but an imitation. **Comic World**, the one fanzine of paramount significance in terms of comic history, remains obscure. **AFTA** stands as the ultimate parody of fanzine failure.

Consider a new fan in the contemporary comic world. He or she finds little of interest on the stands because of the unresponsiveness of the companies. The fanzines do little to direct the new fans to the wealth of extraordinary material produced in the past because busy themselves by bitching about the unresponsiveness of the companies, and in a largely superficial manner. The result of Ted White's assessment of the modern comics medium is not only esotericism but exclusivity. In plain fact, it is becoming very difficult to come across a "new" fan at all.

If the companies begin to wise-up and gain awareness of the importance of its group of steady followers in providing them with financial security against the treachery of modern marketing techniques, it could have a much needed beneficial effect of the quality of comics. If, however, the fan populace does not seize the opportunity to broaden the scope and content of its critical review and general consciuosness, even that base of support may soon erode. □

Unsung Heroes

It's time to write the article that Jack Anderson refused to write—the one that Bob Overstreet refused to listen to.

So as not to add to the triple-digit inflation of the comics market, I won't mention prices. The following comics are priceless anyway. They are so intrinsically valuable, esoteric, and desirable that even the hint of owning one will land you on the **Tomorrow Show** (and not with Rona, either—but with the Big Guy, himself!). They are the stuff that legends and dreams are made of. In fact, they are legends and dreams.

And here, in no particular order of value, are the ten rarest, most valuable comics in the world (the ones they aren't telling you about):

Souperman 1 came out in 1932, predating **Action 1** by six years. It was a promotional item for Al's Soup Kitchen in the Bowery. Al's closed two months later and thus, no more issues. According to the story, Siegel and Shuster ate here a few times, and therefore...(well, I certainly don't want to be named in any lawsuits). Anyhow, the former soup kitchen is now Sal's Skin Salon, in case anyone is interested.

Classics Illustrated 8X "Lady Chatterly's Lover" originally started as a joke in the otherwise staid CI office, but somebody slipped it past the editors and it saw print. It was pulled immediately although it enjoyed extremely good first day sales. People who own this rare comic keep it hidden in their sock drawers. Nonetheless, it's a classic comic.

Flash vs. Superman 1 was supposed to come out in the middle to late sixties when comics fans were demanding to see who was the fastest man. Well, apparently the artist and writer did this comic as a lark. Or, they did it for Gallery, because in this blatant comic we find out how the Flash got his name, and discover why Clark Kent is super, man. Although it exists only in several bad xerox copies, it's well worth the search.

Is This The Devil in the U.S.A. Today? is a fifties Catechetical Guild comic that once again exposes the Commie Menace that threatened us in Tail Gunner Joe's day. This rare, rare giveaway, interestingly, showed that the devil looked like Jack Paar.

Talon 1 Whoops! I made a mistake here. This comic, that Jim Steranko promised us years and years ago and never came out, shouldn't be in this article. It was being saved for the "Ten Rarest Comics that Have Yet to and Never Will Come Out" article. Believe me, there's a lot more than that, though.

Tales of Torture and Degradation 1 is an EC comic that was slated to come out in 1953, but alas, because of Dr. Wertham, how could it? This would have been their masterpiece of grisly horror stories because in this book, we find out what was really going on in the EC offices.

Lawbreaker's Pay the Price! Amazing True Crime Confessions from the Files of the FBI 1 This typical crime comic came out, as all typical crime comics came out, in the late forties and early fifties. Unfortunately, like most "true" crime comics, they made up their own crimes—and very badly, at that. Their logo even covered up all of the blood-ridden cover art, so the issue really didn't sell very well.

Captain U S of A 1, a 1941 comic by Simon and Kirby, is the best comic ever written, drawn, and **not** published. It is, simply, a masterpiece. I even saw a one-page xerox of the original art. If there's a better comic existing somewhere that hasn't been published, I'd like to see it.

Negro Superheroes, Inc. 2 is one of those "esoteric" comics that fans with the big bucks clamor for these days. This four-color four page comic is interesting because it is undoubtedly the shortest comic I have ever seen. Of course, it came out in 1951 and there weren't many of these kind o' heroes. I would love to see the even rarer first issue to find out the origin of Funky Man.

Marvel Premiere Tales Classics 1, while not valueless, isn't as valuable as the rest on the list since it is a reprint. It reprints **Spiderman** 176, which didn't come out that long ago. Besides, it was reprinted in **Marvel Premiere Tales** 15 and about three other comics. This comic, pulled at the last minute because nobody in their right mind would pay fifty cents for it, is interesting in that six pages from the story were deleted to make more room for Hulk ads for Twinkies. The real interesting part is that the story makes no more, or as much, sense as it did in **Spiderman** 176.

Well, there they are. If you find some, don't try to sell me any. I couldn't afford the monthly installments, much less the down payment, on any of them. □

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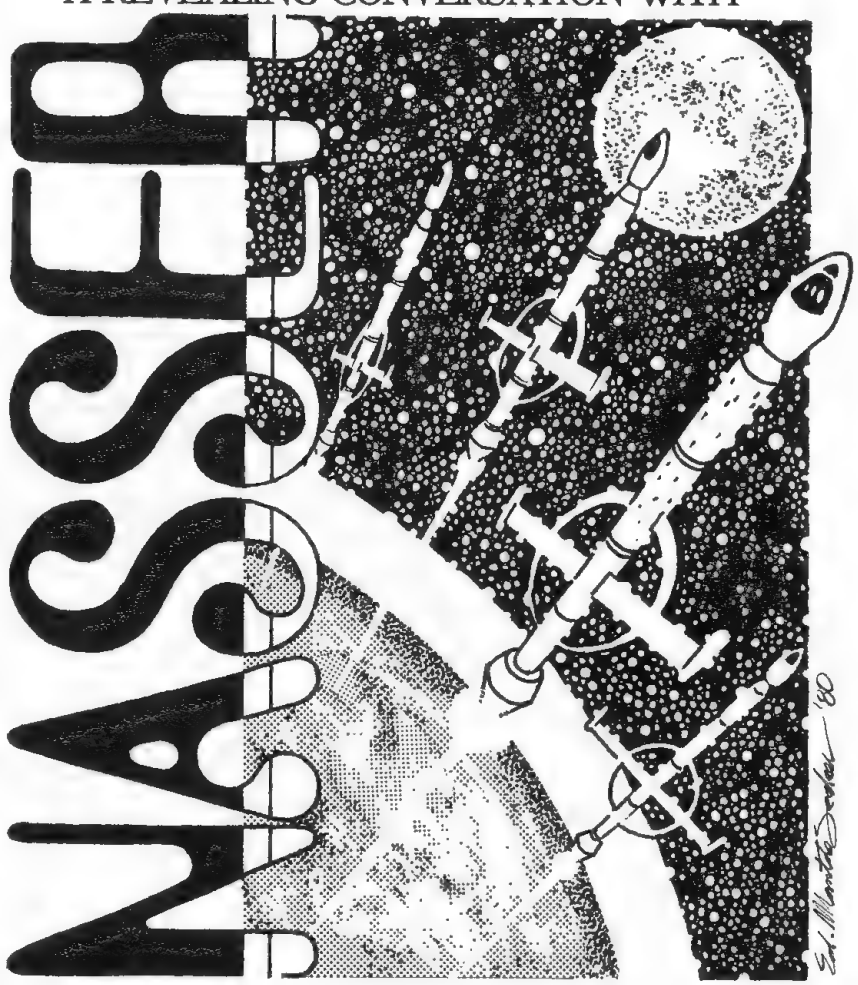
A REVEALING CONVERSATION WITH MASSER



Drawing professional comics fulfilled a childhood dream of Michael Nasser. Nasser, born in Detroit, moved to Lebanon when he was eight months old with his parents and his older brother. After reading black and white Arabic versions of Batman *and* Superboy, *he wanted to be a comic artist. Nasser returned to Detroit in 1967, enrolled in high school art classes, and later majored in Art Education at Wayne State University. During this time he achieved in ROTC the rank of lieutenant-colonel, second in command of 4,000 cadets.*

Nasser was self-employed as a sign-painter for two years and also did work in advertising and portraitures. In 1972 he became active in Detroit fandom, attending comic conventions and illustrating a cover for Fan Informer, *his first published work.*

He left for New York in 1975 to live with Arvell Jones and Keith Pollard. For three months he drew new covers for Marvel's British reprints, at a beginning rate of $25 a page. Since Marvel scripts were unavailable at that time, Nasser approached DC Comics and Gerry Conway offered him "Tales of the Great Disaster" in Kamandi. *Later, he accepted Neal Adams' invitation, made at a 1975 convention, to join Continuity Associates.*

To date one of his most memorable works, and among his personal favorites, has been the Martian Manhunter with Terry Austin. Shortly after emerging in professional comics he gained a noted reputation as an occasional prankster and a skillful illustrator. Recently he has been doing Star Trek, Xanadu, *and a Vision story for Marvel comics, working 35-65 hours per week. Nasser, at 24, is single and currently resides in Goleta, CA.*

Since 1977 his work, most notably in Star*Reach, *has often prophesed a creative politicoreligious theme derived from diverse sources ranging from superhero adventure to Biblical prophesy. Nasser's speculations--frequently intriguing, often controversial and, at times, somewhat outrageous--espouse a refreshing optimism rarely found in such works. Currently, he is assembling these perspectives in book form and may well be one of the first comic illustrators to branch off in such a unique direction.*

The following exclusive telephone interview was conducted by Marty Klug on July 25, 1980. An earlier interview, which appeared in part in Whizzard 12 *with an index of Nasser's American comic work, was conducted by Kenn Thomas and Ed. Mantels-Seeker on September 23, 1978.*

WHIZZARD: During our last interview you mentioned you were planning to do a religious-oriented project called *The New Book of Life*. How is that developing?

NASSER: Actually, it will be called *The Last Testament*....I suspect that it may be finished by late 1986, but I am not working on it alone. It will be written by friends of mine and I will be helping them along.

WHIZZARD: Are these friends in the comic industry?

NASSER: Yes. I have many friends in the industry who are understanding of this project. These people were friends of mine before I began working on this project and they are still friends of mine. Who will choose to write this material will be up to those individuals.

WHIZZARD: What format do you have in mind for this project?

NASSER: We're talking about a book which may be done as a combination of literature and art....If it could be illustrated prose it would be magnificent but if it was only literature it would serve the purpose.

WHIZZARD: Have you contacted any publishers?

NASSER: Over the past few years I have been in contact with publishers who have published my work such as Sal Quartuccio, Marvel Comics, DC Comics and fan publications in Detroit and California. They expressed a great interest in my work but they said it would be wiser for us to wait and see how the story develops before they print any material about it. So, what I'm doing now is living my life according to the way I wish the story to be told. In early 1978 I entered into St. Patrick's Cathedral and after a Sunday ceremony I walked up to the microphone where the priest speaks. The place was full of people I read a few quotes from the Bible from Daniel 12 and Revelations 12.

When I finished with these sayings the priest came up to me and took me by the arms and said, "We're going to call the police." He lead me outside and three police cars were sitting by the side of the cathedral. No one touched me and they let me go.

I have entered St. Patrick's Cathedral many times since then, I do it almost daily, and I speak to the people. They ask me questions and I answer them.

Just recenly I went into St. Patrick's Cathedral and I was angry because I had turned in a few pages of a Vision story I was doing for Marvel and they rejected them. They were very good pages. They didn't feel the storytelling went in accordance to the script. All I did was simplify the script a little; it was very tight.

I was very angry and I bought ten postcards from a concession stand they have inside. I ripped them up in front of the lady and said, "Our Father's house is a house of prayer and you're turning it into a den of thieves." She picked up the postcards and threw them to the floor and said, "Get out!" I got out (laughter).

Today, I went into St. Patrick's Cathedral with the original art to an 11-page piece I did entitled, "The Shout of the Archangel." I taped those to the stairs and people who walked by would see it and they would look at it. We started some interesting conversations. It was a very nice two or three hours.

Now, similar things have happened in California. In San Francisco, Santa Barbara, and San Diego I would enter into the churchs of my friends and we would answer questions and be friendly to the people in the church. They would wonder who we were and what we were doing there. Most of them were friendly but some would get very angry and they would ask us to leave. That didn't happen often—not often at all.

WHIZZARD: How would you account for this angry reaction?

NASSER: The fact is that our population is divided into almost four sections. There is a quarter of the population, unfortunately, who are very wicked in their ways. They don't show anything good for their labors and they go around speaking evil things of other people and ill things of the world. It is that small percentage of the population who are responsible for asking us to leave and who create this commotion.

There is another quarter of the population who are very good-hearted and produce very good work. No matter what they do they do it at their best.... They glorify the world that they live in and they make it a beautiful world. Of course, there is the other half of the population and sometimes they go one way and other times they go the other way for whatever moves them at the time.

We are trying to gather together that one quarter of the population which is the good part. We're beginning sort of a religious movement. We plan travelling through the country sometime within the next couple of years once word gets around and we get some media publicity. It's not necessary; word of mouth will do it. We plan spending a lot of time outside talking with people and enjoying our freedom.

WHIZZARD: Have you received any media coverage as of yet?

NASSER: The closest thing I've had to it was appearing on the news show here. We were standing in a line for *Star Wars* and a television crew came and we spoke a couple of words with them.

There was a convention here recently and we did an interview with channel four. We talked about the comic industry a little bit because that's what they wanted to talk about. I mentioned that I was into Biblical prophecy and they began asking me questions about that. Unfortunately, they didn't televise that particular sequence.

Other media publicity that I've received has been in the comic book market.

Actually, one of the greatest, and one for which I'm very grateful, is the interview which you printed in *Whizzard* 12 which made me very, very happy.

There were instances in California where we went to a few radio stations but they said they didn't want to do a radio show with us (laughter). My attempt wasn't to do a radio show.

Some people are understanding the movement and it's slowly picking up. As of yet, the media coverage has been very little.

WHIZZARD: Have you approached either of the two major comic companies with publishing this project that you're working on?

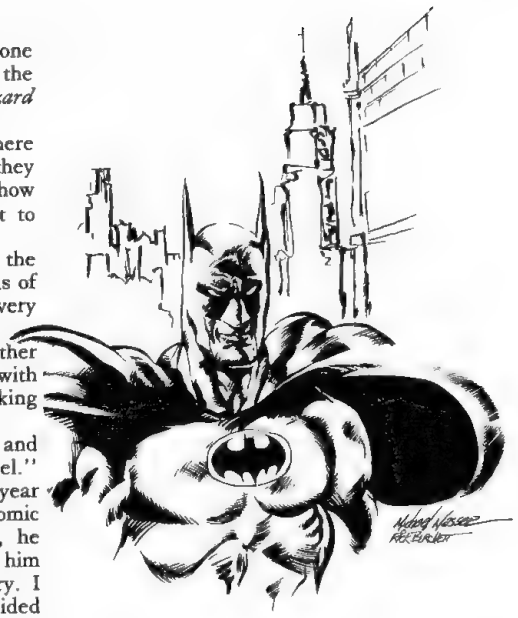
NASSER: I have approached DC and Marvel with "Shout of the Archangel." When I showed it to Sol Harrison a year and a half ago I presented it as a comic book story.... After talking with him, he called Paul Levitz on the line and told him to prepare ten pages for a color story. I went to him the next day and he decided he didn't want to do it. I suspect he was saying that to appease me at the time. He did tell me that three people came in the next day with religious material and asked him to publish it. He didn't want to publish it.

"I TOLD HIM ONE DAY HE WAS GOING TO TITAN WITH ME IN A SPACESHIP. WORD GOT AROUND THE INDUSTRY THAT I WAS ACTING IN A STRANGE MANNER."

DC Comics, it looks right now, seems to have closed their doors to me. Presently, I'm working for Marvel. I just did a Vision story and I'm tightening up Rich Buckler's layouts on Xanadu. Marvel is treating me very well. They're giving me a great deal of freedom. I could be of real help to the comic book industry but they have so many demands. They want artwork to look like their regular books--like everything they've published before. They're afraid to take any chances.

That doesn't stop me from exposing this material to the whole population of New York. I've walked through New York City and meet people on the street who call themselves missionaries and who say they do the "work of God" for various religious organizations. I've visited them at their organizations and I've spoken with them. I've presented some of my material. I've also done some artwork for some of them. That's basically the exposure that this material has received.

WHIZZARD: Why do you think DC or Marvel have not been receptive to publishing religious material? Do you think it's just a general lack of experimentation or other underlying reasons?



NASSER: It's very hard to say. I visited Paul Levitz recently and asked him if there was any work--any covers or any scripts--that he would let me have. He said, "I've seen some of your recent work, 'The Shout of the Archangel.' Is that what you have in mind for us?" I said, "If you want to publish that it would be fine with me but if you don't I'd be more than happy to do some comic book work." He said, "We don't have anything for you now."

When I first came back from California both companies were taken aback by my behavior. I went into Paul Levitz's office and told him that one day he was going to Titan with me in a spaceship (laughter). Word got around the industry that I was acting in a strange manner and I suspect for that reason they have closed their doors to that material. That is not to say they will not accept it one day because I do perceive the importance of this small 11 page piece will be so great that *Time* or *Newsweek* would publish it as a page in their religious section one day.

WHIZZARD: Have you approached other publications outside the comic industry with that material?

NASSER: None of the larger publications, yet. I've made appointments with the editors at *Newsweek* and *Time* but because of the circumstances I was under at the time I had to cancell them. I was being pushed around. It was a very trying time for me. I had lost my apartment and I was living basically on the streets. Many of the people in the studio thought it would be wiser for me to do something in order to clean up my act so I could give a better presentation. That culminated in me leaving New York City and going to Detroit and, while being pressured by my mother, being admitted to a psychiatric hospital. It was an incredible experience.

First, I saw the psychiatrist and he asked, "What's the problem, Mike?" I said, "Listen doctor, there's no problem. I was pressured to come here by my mother and my family." I started telling him about my experiences in New York and we

started discussing the Bible. He said he thought it would be wise for me to go into the hospital for some examinations for a period of time.

There are people who really believe they are ill in that hospital and they don't have to believe that. They are made to believe it by family and friends and pressures around them. The fact is all they need is someone to strengthen them and to make they see a little bit of hope for themselves. That was basically what I did in the hospital.... We had a good time.

The administrator of the hospital took interest in me and called a meeting of 200 psychiatrists from local hospitals. He invited me in with them to ask me questions. When it was over and I had spoken my piece he said to me, "Y'know Mike, we don't believe a word you're saying so don't come back here again. I don't want you back in the hospital." (laughter)

Then I went to California and stayed with John Fuller and his family. I did a logo for their church newspaper. I showed the pastor the work I was doing and he was taken aback by it; he wasn't very receptive at all. One day after spending a great deal of time with John I said, "Listen, we can't just go into church and not say anything. We can't just sit there." So we went into church one day and I walked up to the front. The pastor was upset. He said, "You can't come up here, this is my space!" (laughter) I went to the back and read from the Bible to a few people. Everyone said, "That's a good reading, Mike."

Some of the priests, the so-called men of the cloth were unhappy with me. They are part of the fourth of the population which speaks things they don't understand. They don't speak any good words over the microphone. They just lay burdens on people and say "do this and don't do that" and they themselves don't do anything which they tell those people to do.

WHIZZARD: What type of reaction have you received from church congregations?

NASSER: Most of those people in the church are very good people. I find there's a great deal of love among the people there.... We have good conversations. Of course, other people get upset and they give me dirty looks and they walk away.

WHIZZARD: Are you planning to have *The Last Testament* printed by an independent publisher since neither Marvel nor DC are receptive to that material?

NASSER: Yes.

WHIZZARD: During the last interview you stated that this book is generally concerned with discussing Biblical prophecy and its relationship to world destruction, religious renaissance, and space migration. Are these still the dominant themes in this project?

NASSER: Yes. I can briefly foresee some of the events that our society will go through over the period of the next few years. There will be a great deal of destruction by earthquakes and floods. Many cities might fall. It was written by the prophets long ago that this will happen at the time of the end of the world.

WHIZZARD: What has lead you into reaching these conclusions?

NASSER: It's a sign of the times. The Bible prophecies state that close to the time of the end there will rise a corporate structure. It's called the Beast in Revelations.

WHIZZARD: How would you account for the reluctance of most scientists to accept such predictions of catastrophism?

NASSER: They don't want to make anyone afraid. Most scientists know they have the power to present any kind of world they want to the people that they present it to. They present an ideal world. They build things which make it easier for society to get along but it's really not in their power. It's in God's power. It always has been and it always will be.

WHIZZARD: Would you describe yourself as a fundamentalist?

NASSER: If you wish to call me a fundamentalist, I would agree with you. It's hard for me to say.

WHIZZARD: In the last interview you stated that after such geological disasters there would be social upheaval, a strong religious revival, and a search for new leaders to cater to that interest. Do you see yourself possibly emerging as a leader of such a movement?

NASSER: Yes. In the next few years I will help form, with many people who are friends of mine, a political party.... That will only be the beginning.

WHIZZARD: What would be the central message of such a movement?

NASSER: The world is improving and it will continue to improve. It's up to each individual alive to make it consistently better. That's one of the platforms that the party will take.

Mankind today is still at a very young age. Our potential hasn't been seen. There will always be people alive improving the world by making things and producing things. Let them do that; that's fine. Let them build spaceships. That's what we want. Ultimately our goal is to reach the stars.

WHIZZARD: In what ways do you think this movement could succeed where traditional religious institutions have failed?

NASSER: It's hard to say if any of the other ones have failed. All of the other ones have fulfilled their ordained goals.

In the hands of the right men, our society would prosper at a much faster rate than if it remained in the hands of people who are in power now. Take Jimmy Carter, for example. He's a good man but he's not in control of his presidential position.

There was an interesting movie recently with Peter Sellers called *Being There*. It was speaking about the potential of our government if the right man came into power....They were trying to show that the wrong man as president could slow down the progress of society.

WHIZZARD: Are you any more sympathetic to other existing political systems or do you think it's just a problem of wrong leaders?

NASSER: Throughout the ages there have been unjust and unfair leaders who did things for their own gain which continue to perpetuate their power with no sympathy

for the people they are presiding over. There are many of them in office today as leaders of our country.

But that's only for an appointed time. The day will come when there will be a separation between those people and others who do good things. They say in Bible prophecy that the wicked shall be thrown into a lake burning with fire and brimstone and the just, the fair, and the righteous shall inherit a paradise, promised since the foundation of the world.

WHIZZARD: But in the meantime those political leaders, which you described as wicked, would tend to be reluctant to relinquish their power.

NASSER: It's not in their power.

Fortunately there have been men, like Buckminster Fuller, who have spent their whole lives trying to improve our world. There will always be at the right place and at the right time people who will have power over the wicked in the end.

WHIZZARD: In *Utopia or Oblivion* Buckminster Fuller proposed a worldwide system which coordinated natural resources with peoples' needs and provided "physical and economic abudnance adequate for all." Would you say that such a system is likely without radically altering existing forms of government?

NASSER: No, it's not likely without radically altering existing forms of government. It's in Buckminster Fuller's plan to overthrow the government. He may not make it known right now (laughter), but he has a pamphlet in which he advertises work and his activities and he says that there must be a revolution, but a quiet one.

According to his writings and according to the solutions that his organization the World Game has worked out for the rest of humanity, there's going to be incredible social upheaval. He says that the school systems will have to go completely and that kids will start getting their education on television. He claims that the government system will have to be changed radically. Our tax structure will have to be changed radically.

WHIZZARD: When did you first hear about the World Game?

NASSER: I was at a party of Craig Russell and met Rick E. Meyer, who was a friend of his. Rick Meyer was a very asute young man and he spoke to the people at the party about the World Game in Philadelphia and about Buckminster Fuller's activites.

Three days later I called Rick Meyer and told him I wanted to hear more about the World Game and he gave me this pamphlet. It was very well designed. At the top it advertised next year's World Game and said for $250 you could attend it and they will answer all your questions and tell you everything you want to know this organization.†

....There is another organization called the Club of Rome, which is another similar humanitarian type of organization. There are a few other little ones which have become branches. Many of the people that are in the teaching positions in the World Game, interesting enough, hold important political offices.

"IN IRAN THE PEOPLE ON THE STREETS CHEERED FOR ONE MAN THAT HAS COME TO SAVE THEIR PEOPLE....ONE DAY THAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IN AMERICA."

One of them, Fred Wiebe, worked at the United Nations building connected to the promotion of solar research. I talked with him a few times in order to gain more information about the World Game and we became very friendly. We had dinner a few times.

Buckminster Fuller's World Game is a very powerful organization. They hold the keys to our technological advancement.... Many of our leading scientists, who make accessible all of our latest technological advances to the people, are members of Buckminster Fuller's World Game in one way or another, even if they only put their names on a list supporting what he does.

WHIZZARD: How long has the World Game existed as an organization?

NASSER: According to something I read by Buckminster Fuller, he sent me a letter describing how he initially got into this, it's existed since 1927.

There was a time when he was in the service and he was very frustrated. His time was up and he really wanted to stay in the Air Force. Later he decided that they weren't doing anything that he felt was very good or righteous so he undertook it upon himself to leave to live upon an island with his wife and child.

He started writing the beginning of a book which was later titled *Operating Manual for the Spaceship Earth*. He was basically talking about rebuilding or redesigning a better world....As that book became more successful, and there were people of more importance who read his work, understood it, and followed it, he created a sort of cult following. He began writing other books which later helped formulate the organization he called the World Game.

WHIZZARD: Another major theme which you discussed in the last interview was space migration. Timothy Leary, one of the founders of a west coast movement called SMI2LE [space migration, increased intelligence, and life extension] made the observation in *New Libertarian Weekly* that "it's becoming cheaper to build new worlds in space than to fight over the old one down here." Would you agree with that?

NASSER: Yes. It would seem very reasonable that we could transport a large mass of people--first you would start with engineers--to a space colony.

Interesting enough, Buckminster Fuller was asked, "When do you ever think we'll get into outer space?" His answer always is, "We're already in outer space." Bucky is more or less concentrating on solving our problems here before we take a step outside while other people in his organization are concentrating on what to do once we solve our problems here and how to perpetuate mankind to reach the stars.

†The World Game is a nonprofit research, planning and education corporation of R. Buckminster Fuller and Earth Metabolic Design, Inc. concerned "with the prudent use of the earth's resources" and the development of "strategies for solving worldwide problems in the most peaceful and effective manner." A weekend seminar of lectures and films discussing "the concepts of the World Game" is available in Philadelphia for $100. Additional information is available from: The World Game, 3500 Market St., Philadelphia, Pa 19104.

WHIZZARD: Do you think such a major system of space migration which you proposed could only come after establishing a world government?

NASSER: Yes, that would be an absolute truth. We have a big problem in the world. The fact is that mankind, until recent generations, never understood the world that he was living on.

We don't have that problem anymore. In recent generations, although we still have separate nations we know who everybody is. We know how many people are on the planet, we know who their leaders are, and we know who's who and who's doing what. But there's a conflict of interest. Everybody wants to become a greater power.

Unless all of mankind can be united under one force it would be impossible to build these colonies. Man's destruction would be more imminent.

WHIZZARD: You mentioned Titan as being a possible goal for space migration.

NASSER: Yes. About two years ago there was an article in *The New York Times* about Titan. The author said Titan is a curiously earth-like moon of Saturn. Of course, there have been other researchers that have told everyone that Titan couldn't possibly have any life on it because there's a layer of methane and amonia gas.

The fact is they've never penetrated the atmosphere. They don't know what's under that layer.... Whether Titan is like Earth or not,‡ or whether it's truly inhabited or not, isn't as important as it being a goal for mankind to strive for. By the time we have built a starship to take us there and if we find there's no life there, it's going to be able to take us much further to another place where there is life.

" PEOPLE ARE SAYING, 'WELL I'M HAVING TROUBLE WORKING IN THE FACTORY HERE, WHAT ARE YOU TELLING ME ABOUT A SPACESHIP?' "

WHIZZARD: Do you think the primary objective of the space program should be to find other life or simply to colonize space?

NASSER: Almost any man who spends any amount of time outside and every once in a while gazes up into the heavens at the vast creation in front of him, has that inward desire to be able to fly out and explore it.

The short accomplishments we've made in space exploration in the last ten years would lead us to safely assume that within the next 50 years we can make accessible for any man who wants to go to be able to go. Not all men will want to go. Not all men want to fly in an airplane...We will live to see the day that if not you then a friend of yours will be able to go.

WHIZZARD: If this is the this is the ultimate goal which everyone intuitively shares, how do you account for the government's reluctance to fund such projects?

NASSER: There are those people, unfortunately, within the government who speak things and somehow get their words published...They believe that this space program is too farfetched. They see these drawings of a space colony with trees growing and they say, "How could we ever do something like this?" They go around telling people that these projects should be shelved and we should concentrate on the problems we have today.

WHIZZARD: What ways would you suggest lobbying politicans to support projects which extend beyond their next election campaign?

NASSER: There's an interesting man in California, Governor Brown. He's a very young but he's risen to a high political position. He understands that in his lifetime he will see a great rise in the space program. For that reason he supported the space program and made that one of his major platforms in running for president. "I'm for the space program. Vote for me."

WHIZZARD: But he lost the nomination.

NASSER: Yet the people of California support the man, admirably. In many of his speeches he has received a great reaction from his people. The Californians are very special. Because of the rumors spoken about California, that one day it might slip into the ocean--maybe due to the Jupiter Effect, those people are more willing to take risks than anybody else in the country. NASA has its headquarters in California. People there try and do the best they can. In the rest of the country people are saying, "Well, I'm having trouble working in the factory here. What are you telling me about a spaceship?"

WHIZZARD: Then you feel the country's reluctance to support the space program has been for short-term economic reasons?

NASSER: You must understand that one of the things that governs the world generally is what people read in the papers and what they hear on television and radio.... All the media that people are exposed to is meant to accomodate people living in that particular part of the country. If you ever spend any time in Detroit you will constantly hear stories on the news about car sales. In New York I don't hear anything about car sales.

That's something Buckminster Fuller is concentrating on. He is trying to spiritually revitalize our media so that things people are exposed to will give them a wider understanding of what is happening in the world.

Over the past two or three years there's a spiritual revitalization all over the world. It's coming and there's nothing anyone can do to stop it. In Iran the people on the streets cheered for one man that had come to save their people: Khomeni. That's only the beginning. One day that's going to happen in America....In America now there's greater talk about the spirit of God being a guiding force.

WHIZZARD: You're suggesting that in

‡Carl Sagan noted in *Broca's Brain* that Titan has an atmospheric pressure of approximately ten milibars, about one percent of Earth's pressure, and a surface temperature possibly as low as -185 degrees Centigrade. Further information is anticipated after a 1981 Voyager mission.

America religious leaders will emerge in political positions?

NASSER: Yes. Definitely. Look at Rev. Moon. He's rising to be a very influential force...He's also getting enough media attention that he could easily come into political power one day for a time.

WHIZZARD: Then again, there are people like Jim Jones.

NASSER: Unfortunately, there are certain men who believe the only way they can overcome burdens they are faced with is to destroy their lives completely and stop fighting. The real leaders, the good leaders, would never destroy anyone's life. They would only work to save a life. I was very saddened by that incident. The time will come when the flesh will die. But the work that you do, that will never die. It will always be remembered.

WHIZZARD: When did you first start becoming interested in these subjects?

NASSER: I suspect I was perceiving them all along ever since childhood. I was very optimistic and always felt that this was a very good world and somehow there was a course that men would take or that the world would take that would be a very glorious one.

As I grew in Lebanon I learned in the schools about history and government. At the time the American corporate structure started establishing itself in Beirut which was only two miles away from our little town. I started seeing that corporations had managed to penetrate national borders and infiltrate themselves into other countries.

Then I came to America and thought the world's gone crazy. Everyone's here in America....It's a place of opportunity where you have greater freedom than almost any other country in the world.

WHIZZARD: In what ways has the comic industry helped you in expressing the need for religious renaissance and space migration?

NASSER: When I was very young I would be asked what I wanted to be when I grew up. I said, "I wanted to be a comic book artist." I didn't really understand what the importance of that role might be until later. After graduating from high school, somehow I was still reading comics, and I still wanted to be a comic book artist.

I enjoyed Neal's work especially. I saw in his art that not only was this man able to draw the human body and understand how it works--how the muscles work and how the face looks with various expressions, how people look and how they move--but he was also a very good artist. He understood what people were like and he understood what his society was like.

Neal was able to design space vehicles, automobiles, cities, and buildings through comics. These would be lessons you would learn in design classes in college but he was doing them in comic books. So I came to New York and learned how to do the same thing. I learned how to draw people and in comics I would draw interior furniture, televisions--whatever was necessary for the story.

After doing that for a few years there came a time when I reached a certain proficiency and realized I was communicating to a large number of people. I'd go to conventions and see that there's a large number of people who follow my work. They wanted to see more of it and they wanted to see it improved. It was my responsibility to do that if I was to continue working as a comic book artist.

Then came the ultimate question. Now that I've reached this point where I could say anything I wanted through my work, I had to decide what was the most important thing that I would say or do. That was a question I pondered on that day when I decided to leave the comic book industry and go to California and decided not to do comics.

I read the Bible and I started understanding that I had a particular mission to fulfill. I really didn't understand what it was at the time but in the following two years, with a great deal of help from all my friends, I started to understand how I could implement the things that I had learned through my work. In a sense comic books became a springboard for the work I'm doing now.

WHIZZARD: You went to California in 1977?

NASSER: Yes, that was my first trip to California. I spent three days at Steve Leialoha's place and that's when I illustrated the *Star*Reach* job, "The Old, New and Final Testament."

Then I hitchhiked to San Clemente and lived in the mountains for about a month. I had the Bible and I read it. I went down to the beach and met some Christian people in that area and stayed with them for awhile.

I returned to New York and it was very chaotic. I really strained my relationships with all my friends. It was a very bad period. Then I went back to California and went back to New York and tried it again. Again, it didn't work out. Then I went to Detroit and stayed in the hospital for eight weeks and then went immediately back to California. Later, I went back to New York.

There was an incident which resulted in me leaving New York again. I was doing the *Marvel Two-in-One* job and was drawing only two pages a week. I had a hotel room and I couldn't afford to keep it any longer so I left my hotel room and cam to stay at the studio. Neal said I couldn't live in the studio. In a fit of anger I went to the airport and walked onto an airplane with no ticket. It was four in the morning. (laughter)....Then they put me into a hospital because of the way I was speaking: I was answering a lot of their questions with Biblical phrases. After that I went back to Detroit.

WHIZZARD: Do you feel that comics is the best medium for popularizing such a message?

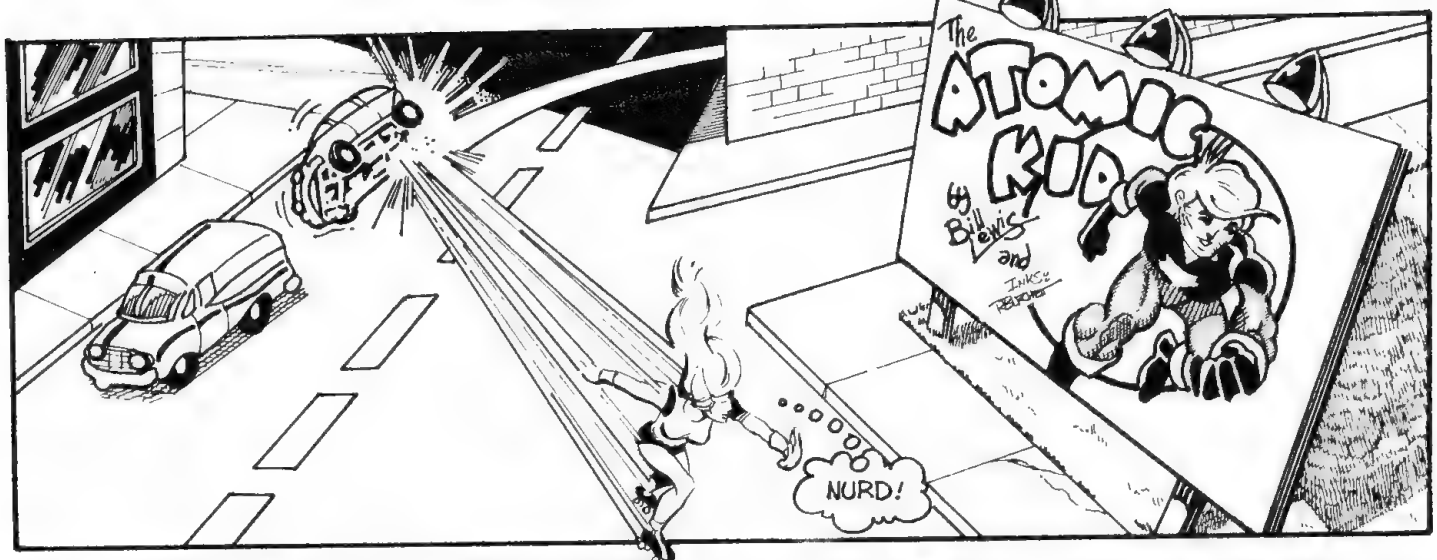
NASSER: Comics is an incredibly good medium.

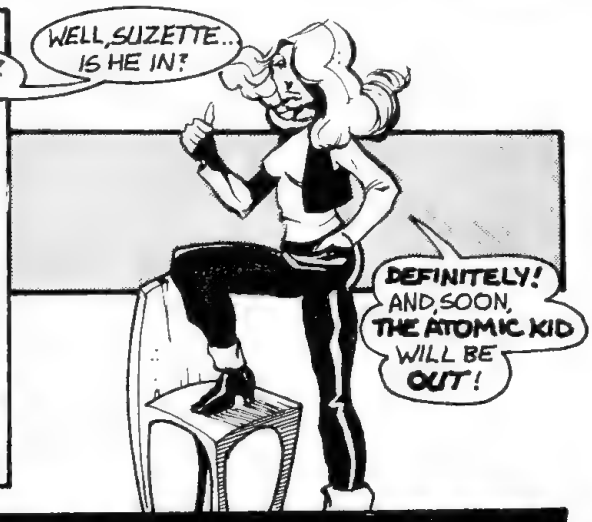
WHIZZARD: In what ways is it superior to, say, television or magazines?

NASSER: There are things that an artist can do that a television producer cannot do. There are certain images that he can create. There are certain thoughts he can inspire with art which are much more effective than images I've seen on television. Of course, eventually our work could be displayed on television or in magazines.

I'm very interested in the television and film industry. I'd like to make films one day, maybe in the near future.

Somehow we have found ourselves in the comic book industry. We are not television producers or film producers; we are artists. So we have to support the industry that we're in and do the best with what we have. □





CREEP SUZETTE'S ALL SINNERS SQUAD

ONE MONTH LATER...
AL! SALLY! WAIT UP!
IT'S LAURIE LATHROP. WHAT'S WITH HER?
WE FINALLY GOT A LETTER FROM LEN. TAKE A LOOK!
DEAR FOLKS, ALL THRU SCHOOL EVERYONE LAUGHED AT MY QUICK-SOLID, POISONOUS, AND EXPLOSIVE WHIPPED CREAM EXPERIMENTS. NOW THAT I'VE JOINED CREEP SUZETTE, NO ONE WILL EVER LAUGH AGAIN!
Hmmm... THIS COULD BE A CLUE!
WELL, WE KNOW SUZETTE IS NOW HOLED UP IN HER MOUNTAIN RETREAT.
BUT IF LEN IS THERE OF HIS OWN FREE WILL WE CAN'T JUST GRAB 'IM!
RIGHT! SO WE TRY ANOTHER METHOD...
NAMELY...
TRICKERY AND DECEIT, WHAT ELSE?
LISTEN, SAL, I GOTTA PLAN...
THEN, ONE DAY, HIGH ATOP THE PEAKS, MILES AWAY...
WELL, YOU TWO ARE STARTING TO SHAPE UP.
I THINK YOU'RE ABOUT READY TO TAKE ON YOU-KNOW-WHO!
HOW ARE THE COSTUMES I DESIGNED?
JUST FABULOUS, BOSS! YOU'RE A REGULAR BILL LEWIS!
THE WORLD IS SOON GONNA HEAR ABOUT MS. WHIZ BOY!
HOW ABOUT YOU, LEN?
I THINK I PREFER MY NEW NAME... CRUEL WHIP!
WITH THIS PORTABLE FOAM DISPENSER, I CAN REALLY PLASTER ANYONE IN MY WAY!
SPOOSH!
...LIKE SO!
RIGHT! PARTICULARLY A CERTAIN TOWHEADED TROUBLE-MAKER WHOSE NAME SLIPS MY MIND!
BRR-RING!
Hmm... THE DOOR!
YES... MAY I HELP YOU?
YOU CAN STAND ASIDE AND WELCOME YOUR NEWEST MEMBER...
THE AWSOME OBLIVIA!!

OBLIVIA, Hmm? ARE YOU ANY GOOD?
ONLY THE BEST!
FOR YEARS, I'VE KEPT MY POWERS A SECRET.
WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO USE THEM...
...FOR PERSONAL GAIN, NATCH!
OH, OF COURSE!
STRANGE, I'D ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE SUCH A NICE KID...
...SALLY MANDER!
HEY!
FOOLISH CHILD, DID YOU HOPE TO DECEIVE ME!
WELL, YOU MERELY TRAPPED YOURSELF!
THIS FORTRESS IS COMPLETELY SEALED! NO ONE CAN GET IN...
NOT EVEN YOUR ATOMIC BOY FRIEND!
MY, WHAT A TERRIBLE SHAME!
YOU!!
NEXT TIME, TRY TO RIP OFF THE WHOLE MASK, SUZIE!
NOW, I BELIEVE WE HAVE THINGS TO DISCUSS!
TALK YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS SNUFFO-SONIC RAY, TWERP!
YOW! TOUCHY, AREN'T WE?
LOOK, LEN! IT'S THE ATOMIC KID! THIS IS OUR BIG CHANCE!
C'MON! WE'LL SHOW THAT CREEP!
NO!
=MMMFPH!=
YOU KNOW, YOU'D BEST HAVE A GOOD REASON FOR THIS!

=whew= IT'S GETTING AWFUL HUMID IN HERE!
I NEED SOME KIND OF BREAK!
WELLLLL, NOW...
A MAKESHIFT LASSO, HUH?
JUST WHAT I NEED!
FROM NOW ON, IT'S HAPPY TRAILS!
HIDING IS FUTILE, KID! YOU'RE CAUGHT, AND YOU KNOW IT!
eh?
LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND SEE WHO'S BEEN CAUGHT, SUSAN!
RELEASE ME, YOU SLIME!
NOW, WOULD YOU PLEASE TELL ME WHERE I COULD FIND LEN LATHROP?
EAT GLASS!
sigh...
NEVER MIND, SUZIE... C'MON, I'LL INTRO DUCE YOU TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE.
SWELL! WELL, I SHOULDA GUESSED.
WHAT'S WITH YOU, LATHROP? GONE SOFT ON A FORMER CLASSMATE?
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!
HE'S JUST A FRESHMAN. WHAT DO I CARE FOR FRESHMAN?
BUT CHECK OUT OUR FEARLESS LEADER.... ALREADY SHE GETS CAPTURED!
WE COULD DO BETTER BY OURSELVES! IN FACT, WE WILL!
DON'T WORRY, MZ. WHIZZ, THE ATOMIC KID WILL GET HIS JUST DESSERTS!
AND IT JUST WON'T BE DESSERT WITHOUT THE TASTE OF CRUEL WHIP!
DID YOU HAVE TO SAY THAT?
THE END?

REVIEWS... REVIEWS

Swashbucklers 1, Spring, 1980
[$1.50, 64 pages]
Vista Graphics Publications
5501 Louisiana
St. Louis, MO 63111

Big City Comics 1, 1980
[$1.00, 36 pages]
1135 Cleveland
Evanston, IL 60202

Invasion of Earth and **Arnie Arnolds Space Cadet!**
[35 cents, 3-5 xerox pages]
Not Available Comics
17 South Euclid #3
St. Louis, MO 63108 (KT)

The attention of the reviews this issue briefly turns homeward. Many fan talents in the St. Louis area have recently begun publishing alternative press works that deserve examination if only for the local mini-renaissance they reflect. **Whizzard**, being the oldest still existing small press magazine in St. Louis concerned with the graphic medium, welcomes and applauds these new endeavors and hopes the resurgence of creative activity in town will grow to produce a wealth of memorable material. Certainly the talent for it exists here.

Most ambitious among the new fan work is a stripzine called **Swashbucklers**. This 64 page magazine can be commended for its excellent paper stock, top-notch reproduction and modest price of only $1.50. Moreover, it is produced by a team of talented individuals committed to developing quality comics. As publisher Gerald Brown admits, however, "You will from time to time see errors in continuity, artistic inconsistencies, editorial blunders." Although these problems do exist in **Swashbucklers**, they are not the magazine's major faults.

PARTY DOG: Jim Bourgeois' hero in Big City Comics 1.

To be sure, **Swashbucklers** contains a number of clever strips. Artist/writer Don Secrease contributes a pirate story interesting in that it does not use many dialog balloons. It has a threadbare plot redeemed by understatement; the familial complexities of the characters hint at interactions not touched upon by the story. Paul Cordel offers a variation on the Arthurian legend artistically distinguished in the issue by an often excessive use of pointillism shading. The story, replete with a (sic) Rick Wakeman epigram, makes a valiant effort at breathing new life into an old legend. The most well-drawn strip in **Swashbucklers** is Rick Burchett's "Enigma." The spy-type narrative (Enigma is a spy whose identity is unknown even to his superiors) adds nothing new to the genre but Burchett proves himself quite competent at sustaining a flow of action in the artwork from start to finish. Also, his work is tighter, crisper, and more stylistic than anything else in the issue.

Lest one might suspect an inordinate fondness of Burchett's art because of his excellent contributions to **Whizzard**, note that **Swashbucklers** is so taken by the artist's talent that he inks two other strips for it. Indeed, this is one of the artistic inconsistencies publisher Brown warns of. Burchett's inks contribute little to the two Secrease strips they adorn.

Technical considerations such as this, though, can be forgiven in an amateur magazine, particularly in the small press. **Swashbucklers** suffers mostly from a conceptual problem. The staff of the magazine, gifted as it is, seemingly wishes only to imitate the successful formula of the mainstream. As the name indicates, these are swashbuckling tales: action, adventure, bravado and broads type of thing. Besides being grossly unfair to women, this editorial approach is lamentable for a number of other reasons. First and foremost among them: it has already been done. Spies, pirates and spacemen have been depicted in straight adventure for decades, to the extent that they now ostensibly cry out for newer dimensions of psychology, social relevance or humor. Even the cliche-bound mainstream has long since moved on to ghost-heroes, god-characters and all manner of cosmic beings as the mainstay characters for their wares. **Swashbucklers** emulates long abandoned character stereotypes. It reads like a Golden Age comic without that essential spark of originality.

Since it is printed and distributed as a small-circulation, alternate press publication, **Swashbucklers**' predilection for conceptually domestic fantasies is particularly unfortunate. The alternate press exists as a testing ground for new ideas, experimentation and novel presentations. If anything, this first issue of **Swashbucklers** proves its staff's ability to draw successful comics in ordinary ways. Until it develops dimensional characterizations, pertinent plots and a new approach, however, this stripzine will not make much of an impression on seasoned comics readers.

Of course, many comics alternatives carry experimentation and novelty to obscure and meaningless extremes. Witness **Heavy Metal** and the majority of undergrounds. This thought should be kept in mind when examining **Big City Comics**, a new underground with a strip by another **Whizzard** hand, Jim Bourgeois. **Big City Comics** hails from Chicago but Bourgeois is a bred St. Louisan whose first work appeared in this fanzine, providing him a place in the mini-renaissance. The other two-thirds of **Big City Comics** should not be ignored, however, because native St. Louisans do not draw it. It should be ignored because it is ill-conceived, ill-prepared and a waste of attention, the kind of work that impoverishes much paper in the underground field.

While clearly the best thing in **Big City Comics**, Bourgeois' strip, "My Night to Howl," walks a thin line of acceptability with regard to "avante-garde" comics material. Bourgeois obviously prepared the story carefully and vith a considered sense of artistic vision but the result raises deep suspicions about its vailidity or meaning. "My Night to Howl" is not **Heavy Metal** brand Phariseeism touted by lesser talents to justify bad work but it is not altogether well-crafted experimentation.

The satire in Bourgeois' strip does not come across. The narrative is convoluted, its important points subverted by senseless and too much action. The travails of Party Dog and Barnacle Bill at a Mr. Stackies fast-food dump seems like a promising backdrop for jabs at cheap society and Middle America. The characters, however, just float episodically through the strip, explode or do whatever while the narrative moves from aphorism to aphorism. There is no direction here and apparently no reason to lend credence to what is being said.

Value can be found in Bourgeois' artwork, though. Despite a stiffness in the basic drawing, made more awkward by

meticulous detail, the artist has transformed the lacey, Barry Smith adornments of his early work into a unique, kaliedoscopic style perfectly fitted to the theme of "My Night to Howl." Bourgeois is in the midst of realizing great potential as a stylist. Hopefully, he will continue to aim high in terms of concept and perfected art. His contributions to **Big City Comics**, though, falls short of these lofty goals.

One St. Louis talent works in the super-underground who also has potential to impress the medium. His name is Matt Feazell and he distributes his xeroxed comics through a record store in the Central West End. One can pick up copies of **Invasion of Earth** and **Arnie Arnolds, Space Cadet!** from Feazell for a stamp to see an artist at ease with the comics form.

Of course, not much can be said for the technical quality in either the art or the production of these minicomics. They are amusing throwaways. Feazell combines a punk-rock sensibility (if it can be called that) and a true concern for telling a story with pictures. Elements of Vaughn Bode and other underground influences can be discerned in the art but primarily Feazell plays with the page. If something doesn't work, he scratches it out and starts again. The whole is oddly consistent, though. The art serves to tell the story which, while not exactly high-minded, is somewhat satirical and fun. Feazell circumvents the burdensomeness of Jim Bourgeois' type of art, undercuts a **Swashbuckler**'s retrograde style of storytelling and achieves a pleasant balance with his little endeavors. Appparently, his ability has also struck many underground publishers. His work will soon be appearing regularly in a few underground titles.

These are the earliest manifestations of the St. Louis mini-renaissance. It could blossom, bear bitter fruit or whither away but there is definitely more to come. St. Louis artists have already begun work on the next issue of **Swashbucklers**, a second issue of **Big City Comics** is in the works, a new local comics publication is in the planning stages, and Matt Feazell still sketches away. The initial attempts of the local fans have been noteworthy for their enthusiasm at least and all of them show promising potential. □

Captain Canuck
[a Comely Comic]
CKR Productions Ltd.
7003F, 5th Street, S.E.
Calgara, Alberta
T2H 2G2 Canada (KT)

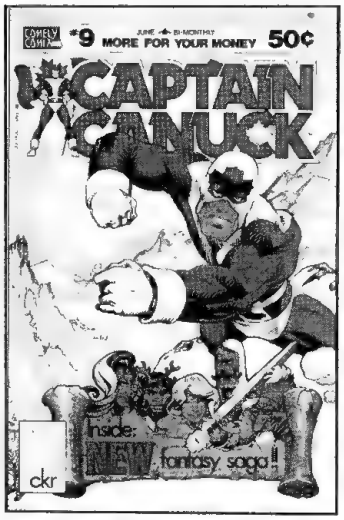
Anyone who has followed the growth of Comely Comics over the past five years has had an opportunity to see a comics project develop from crude initial attempts to the number one alternative comic in the mainstream. **Captain Canuck**'s crowning achievement came this past summer with the publication of **First Summer Special**.

Captain Canuck began in July, 1975 as the brainchild of Richard Comely, a Canadian (and he points out a Mormon) who wanted to produce a superhero unique to his homeland. The first issue resembled more a Paul LeGrazie stripzine than a comic book but the enthusiasm was there and the fan press warmed to the idea. Comely's art was heinous but his writing passable. Captain Canuck was a superagent from Canada in 1994, a combination of spy, superhero and science-fiction genres.

Time passed and Comely became a better writer. His plots became more complicated, his characters filled out and his general prose became clearer. Happily, he gave up drawing **Captain Canuck**. That chore was taken over by George Freeman, a refreshingly original artist with a totally professional ability. Freeman is an excellent layout man with a style reminiscent of Joe Staton and the good portions of Ernie Colon's career. His work is imaginative, nice looking and economical. He is by far a better artist than a great many staff members of American comics companies.

Jean Caldue St. Aubin joined the Comely crew as colorist and a back-up feature artist. As both, he too does a very good job.

Production and distribution for **Captain Canuck** also improved by quantum measures. Today it is the only new mainstream comic in this country produced outside the auspices of DC or Marvel. **First Summer**



Special is 68 pages long and costs 95 cents. For anyone not familiar with **Captain Canuck**, this special is a good chance to purchase a broad sampling of a real comics alternative. It has two short and one feature length Captain Canuck episodes, the latter being the best story yet published by the company. It also contains two humorous short features drawn by St. Aubin and a portfolio of Captain Canuck pictures by Gene Day, Vern Andrusiek, Tom Brummett, and Dave Sim. This comic is definitely a must buy for those interested in the overground medium today.

The future of **Captain Canuck** gets brighter and brighter. If Richard Comely can sustain clarity in this genre-mix, the reading public can look forward to further well-written and well drawn issues of **Captain Canuck**. For the real visionaries in the audience, this comic holds the possibility that Comely will corral more Canadian talent (like **Cerebus the Aardvark** creator Sims) and expand his line. Perhaps Comely Comics can fill the void still present from the passing of Gold Key and Charlton. □

AMBERSTAR, A DULL SHINE

Amberstar by Bruce Jones
Warner Books, $7.95
April 1980, 93 pgs. (MK)

Amberstar is one of those typical cases where the operation was a success yet the patient died. At first glance, well-designed pages alternating professionally typeset copy with full-color "Photo-Multiple" live action and model photography promises an impressive product. However, the space opera script by Bruce Jones, a former comic illustrator, fails to fulfill such great expectations.

The four-part story narrates how Federation pilot Neville Scott and his crashed ship Amberstar, the fastest in the universe carrying a needed shipment of D-76, were pursued by Klete warships. Through the marvels of pseudo-scientific mumbo-jumbo the space fleet discovers his brain waves, confuses him with telepathic projections, and deciphers his coded subconscious defenses to locate him. Alternating between reality and fantasy in his recovery from amnesia, he battles cyclops, dinosaurs and assorted villany. Finally Ears, a humanoid alien with a lizard face, tracks him down planning to capture Scott's famed ship.

Why the Klete and Federation are fighting, why the Klete are following him, why Scott's the only person piloting such an exotic ship, or why he doesn't trade in Amberstar for the Millennium Falcon are never explained. The valuable D-76, a central element of the story, is also never revealed. What exactly is it that a remote colony needs the fastest ship in the universe to deliver? Medication? Munitions? Toilet paper?

Secondly, Jones' characterizations are equally aggravating. A mute copilot passively follows orders like a Huxley Epsilon and then on numerous occasions conveniently rescues Scott. Henrich gets eaten by a Tyrannosaurus but panels later appears without a scratch. Lehan, the only woman in the story, does a very good job at fainting, screaming, and occasionally gasping. Howevér, if it's all a dream by Scott perhaps that might justify such vague motivations, shallow characterizations, or illogical developments (like those incredible alternate universes on television s-f shows where none of the laws of physics apply). One can't help but wonder, though, why our fearless hero with an "IQ of 400" is such as chauvanistic clod. Still, the 'gosh it was only a dream' aspect was tiresome in science fiction even before Judy Garland made her famed film role.

Thirdly, many elements of Jones' story do not readily lend themselves to visual representation. In part three "a host of tentacled monstrosities...[with] bulging eyes leering down from a body composed entirely of pulsating brain tissue," evoke more giggles than apprehension. Low-angle, extreme close-ups, such as those used with Giger's **Alien**, are far more effective than **Amberstar**'s high-angle wide shots which are about as terrorizing as a Japanese actor in a rubber suit crushing a cardboard metropolis.

Amberstar is like one of those beautifully wrapped Christmas presents which end up being just another tie. Its format is intriguing, its printing is excellent, and its design is sharp. It's regrettable that so little attention was given to finding a script comparable to its fine appearance. □

Detectives Inc.,
"A Remembrance of Threatening Green" story: Don McGregor art: Marshall Rogers
Eclipse Enterprises, $6.95
52pgs. 1980 (JD)

This book has it all: nudity, homosexuality, bisexuality, abortion, poverty, race wars, murder, and even real curse words. Yet it lacks one thing that typical overground comics revel in—and that's sensationalism.

Sensationalism would seem to be an easy trap to fall into for writers and artists eager to deal with subject matter prohibited in code approved books. Fortunately, however, Don McGregor and Marshall Rogers' **Detectives Inc.** evades such hazards. Everything in the book is handled tastefully and carefully by co-creators who are obviously and rightfully proud of their work. Private detectives Ted Denning and Bob Rainer are real characters—not the cardboard cutouts ordinarily found in D.C. and Marvel comics. But for the writer of the exceptional Killraven and Black Panther series and the artist who breathed new life into the Batman, perhaps that's just par for the course.

The significance of the title is at first elusive but becomes clearer during the latter third of the adventure. it seems to imply that individuals are doomed to pass from this Earth, while life, symbolized by the green of Nature, goes on. Although the acceptance that one's own life will eventually end is a sobering, and somewhat scary thought, perhaps it takes this realization in a remembrance of threatening green to fully appreciate life as the celebration it truly is. McGregor's theme suggests that individuals, who have suffered great hardship and have become cognizant of life's limitations, can gain solace and a reaffirmation of being related with other people—who all share in the human experience.

When casually flipping through this book on the stands one might get the impression that the artwork isn't up to Rogers' usual level of dynamics. Perhaps it isn't—on the surface. This book is not superficial in its embracing of the subject matter. The subtlety in Rogers' art is a kind only commonly appreciated in the painting medium. That is not to say a subtle approach is better than a dynamic approch; the best approach is the one most effective in telling the story. There is no doubt that Rogers chose correctly. The effect of his artwork kind of sneaks up in back of you and taps you on the shoulder with its message—a nice change of pace to the beating over the head approach so often found in the overground world.

The only sad thing about this book is the price. Once there was a time when one could buy the best comics had to offer for a dime. Even today, though, there are comics formats such as **Heavy Metal** and **Epic Illustrated** capable of accomodating **Detectives, Inc.** with room to spare for less than a third of $6.95—and with a lot more color than just on the cover and in the title.

Thankfully, however, there are companies like Eclipse Enterprises that are willing to give top comic talents a chance to exercise their full potential as storytellers. □

The Complete E.C. Library
[various prices and page counts]
Russ Cochran
P.O. Box 469
West Plains, MO 65775 (JD)

One of the most significant happenings in comics today, perhaps not too surprisingly, comes in the form of reprints of comics past. Each component of Russ Cochran's **Complete E.C. Library** published thus far is a beauty to behold both in content and format. The content, of course, includes a list of writers, artists, and editors that reads like a "Who's Who" of the industry: the original E.C. crew. That these highly-respected comics from the 1950's are being reprinted with such integrity is only fitting.

All sets of this library consist of 9 x 12, hard-cover volumes that contain either five or six complete E.C. issues.Each volume includes the original letters page, text page, text stories, and house ads as well as pertinent and insightful information compiled by Cochran and other E.C. experts. The cover of each comic (including the annuals) is reproduced in versions of the initial colorings. Marie Severin, the original E.C. colorist, is also the colorist for Cochran's **Library**. The interior work, reproduced in black and white from the original art, is immaculately clear and on good stock paper. handsome, color slipcovers for each component are also available. Each issue in each volume is signature-sewn and bound, not "perfect" bound. All pages, including the color wraparounds, are sewn in, not merely glued.

Cochran's efforts on **The Complete E.C. Library** allow the novice a first-hand knowledge of the great E.C. line at a reasonable price. At the same time, this project provides the venerable collector of the original comics with safe and convenient access to old favorites. Collectors and fans alike should be thankful that the legacy of Entertaining Comics has been captured so expertly. This product comes with the highest possible recommendation of the reviewer. □

Moon Knight 1
[50 cents, a Marvel Comic] (KT)

The first issue of Marvel's **Moon Knight** compels a second reading to absorb the excessive violence and to understand what is being done with the character. By the end of the comic, the reader finds this is the origin story of Moon Knight, a sub-character of the extended Marvel universe until now relegated to back-up feature and one-shot status. Now that Moon Knight has a vehicle of his own, readers have a monthly chance to revel in his adventures, to read and reread the exploitation and amateurism Marvel passes off as comics.

The editor and the writer of this book, Dennis O'Neil and Doug Moench, no doubt justify this crap as eclectic adventurism. Moon Knight crosses elements of the Spectre, the Shadow, the Batman and even Marvel's old western Ghost Rider with pulp-type stories and pseudo-exotic locales. The product, however, wreaks of cheapness, mindlessness and extremely sloppy work. This book pays no tribute to its antecedents. It only dirties their memory.

Moon Knight, explains the issue, was a mercenary in league with Bushman, a terrorist who rips out people's throats with his steel teeth. Upon the suggestion of his friend Frenchy, the future hero concludes that he is fighting "for the wrong side...no matter what the pay is." After a few more of Bushman's excesses (his men gun down a half-dozen civilians and make their widows dance in bikinis), Moon Knight gets into a fight with Bushman, loses, and is cast into the desert to die. He dies but not before an Egyptian god of the moon can cast a spell to resurrect him and begin his superhero career.

Aside from being a thrill-seeker who conscience twinges in his amorality, Moon Knight is motivated by vengeance. Pleas from his girlfriend prevent him from killing Bushman at the end of the book, remembering "at one point, I was almost like him." Except for the lucky happenstance that he is a goodguy, the reader sees little distinction in the operating philosophies of the two characters. In truth, Moon Knight patterns his crimefighting career after advice from his former boss; "Fear is the key! You must strike total fear into the hearts of your enemies..." Obviously, the stage is being set for a series with gratuitous violence and fuzzy morality, a

kind of conflict without meaning that characterized early episodes of the Moon Knight back-up feature.

To complement this garbled writing, Bill Sienkiewicz draws the most embarrassing swipes since Barry Smith was directed by Marvel to copy Kirby's style in **The Avengers**. Perhaps this is eclecticism also but it certainly does no honor to Neal Adams, the artist whose trappings Sienkiewicz covets. Sienkiewicz offers a superficial imitation of Adams, the movement lines and the action poses. He has no understanding of the human form, believable backgrounds or real looking properties. His creative use of anatomy lets Moon Knight get away with laughable acrobatics, especially on the story's eighteenth page. Sienkiewicz's sense of foreshortening belongs to the Mike Grell school: nonexistent.

The more one reads the first issue of **Moon Knight**, the more amazing it appears; that Sienkiewicz gets paid an artist's wage when people in the fan press of commensurate and superior talent work for free, that a writer like Doug Moench thinks this garbage is realistic adventure and that Marvel presents this book as professional comics. □

"Bravo For Adventure" b&w
written and drawn by Alex Toth
ROOK 3 [6/80, $1.75, 24pgs]
ROOK 4 [8/80, $1.75, 25 pgs.]
Warren Publishing Company (JD)

For those who haven't picked up a Warren magazine lately and don't follow the fan press too closely, there might be a pleasant surprise awaiting at the back issue store. The third and fourth editions of **The Rook** (one of Publisher James' most recent additions to his magazine line) contain, among other things, Alex Toth's "Bravo for Adventure."

"Bravo for Adventure", originally created in 1975, was to appear in **La Belle Francaise** but their comics department went bust shortly after commissioning the work. Toth considers it to "represent my best written and drawn original copyrighted work to date." It is, at its least, a refreshing story in a field which he feels is "depressing and a crashing bore."

Alex Toth is a master storyteller and, in more ways than one, is to the comics page what Noel Sickles was to the comics strip. In "Bravo for Adventure," Toth handles all aspects of the story's creation right down to the lettering, which he believes is "important to the art's design and to its continuity." Toth's economy of line, sense of layout, and knack for uniting the right words with the right pictures all combine to bring these first two installments of the adventures of 30's stunt pilot Jesse Bravo to life.

The banter between the male (Jesse Bravo) and female (Vivi Powell) lead in this tale bring to mind that used in the 30's oriented work of sometimes Toth-inspired artist Howard Chaykin. Yet Chaykin's adventure dramas fall short on authenticity when compared to those of a man who saw that era first hand. Indeed, as was pointed out by (**The Comic Reader**'s) Mike Tiefenbacher, "Bravo for Adventure" has the same feel to it as many 1930's films—films which obviously made a lasting impression on Toth's memory. Besides the obvious Jess Bravo/Errol Flynn parallel, many of the secondary characters in "Bravo" seem to be "cast" from the same couch that they would've been for a film of this type made a half a century ago. This rear-view mirrorism on Toth's part in terms of both story content and flavor is a welcome change of pace from the four-color books of today where the fate of the universe is at stake in every issue.

Perhaps the inherent problem or present day comics is that they are a hodge-podge montage of talents. One person comes up with a story idea, another draws it in pencil, another inks the pencils, another scripts the story, still another letters it, and, if the story is to be printed in color, yet another talented person must be found to apply the pigments. One wonders how much of the story is lost in translation from its original conception to its final "execution".

Alex Toth is the rare exception to the rule; he frequently handles **all** facets of a comics story's creative production; the effort shows and proves itself worthwhile in the finished product. Outside the enjoyment that can be gained from reading "Bravo for Adventure", the most important thing this story possesses is its unspoken challenge to the rest of the industry to treat this communication medium with the respect it deserves and for comics talents to learn and practice the whole craft rather than just a part of it. □

Ray Bradbury
Joseph Olander, Martin Greenberg, ed.
Taplinger Publishing Co.
$12.95 cloth, $5.95 paper
248pgs, June 1980 (MK)

Ray Bradbury, the fifth volume in Taplinger's Writers of the 21st Century series, showcases ten informative essays by leading academics providing extensive, and often compelling, analysis of Bradbury's better-known work. Considerable biographical information and an extensive, yet not exhaustive, 15 page bibliography compliment this collection.

Overall though, despite its limited shortcomings, this collection enhances ones' appreciation of Bradbury as a stylist and satirist whose literary skills generally have been grossly neglected by mainstream critics. □

CARTOONIVERSE

Sixteen years ago few animated television programs appeared on Saturday mornings. Not realizing the potential profits afforded by animated shows, the networks were content to broadcast reruns of **Sky King** and **Roy Rogers**. The cartoons shown were made for theatre repeats of **Mighty Mouse, The Fox and Crow** and **Bugs Bunny** (then only a half-hour program). New programs consisted of the earliest ventures into limited animation such as **Ruff and Reddy, King Leonarde**, and **Astro Boy**. A sci-fi puppet show, **Fireball XL5**, with the intrepid Steve Zodiac also appeared for a few years. The networks did not much call for new animation as they were not sure if anyone actually got out of bed early enough to watch television.

ABC finally broke the ice in 1964 with the premiere of **The Beatles**, featuring caricatures of the lads from Liverpool singing all their hits. It became the number one rated Saturday morning program and proved the existence of an honest-to-goodness early morning audience. Soon, ABC's competitors surmised that the success of the **Beatles** was due to the kids' demand for new cartoons instead of reruns. The talents of the Beatles themselves had little to do with it, they seemed to think. It did not take long for the others to get in the act.

Hanna-Barbera Productions had done little for the networks since **Ruff and Reddy**. Their biggest success at that time—**Huckleberry Hound, Yogi Bear**, and **Quick Draw McGraw**—were done for

syndication. Their only network show was the **Flinstones**, a prime time program. **Secret Squirrel** and **Atom Ant** debuted on NBC in 1965. Animation specifically created for Saturday morning was an idea whose time had finally come.

The next year saw the premiere of another program that profoundly affected the type of cartoons shown on television. That program was **Batman**. It signalled the beginning of the biggest trend to hit Saturday morning television: superheroes.

The man who took the biggest advantage of this new trend was a young executive at CBS, the then-president of Saturday morning and daytime programming, Fred Silverman. The 1967-68 season consisted of 90% adventure cartoons from Hanna-Barbera and the fledgeling outfit Filmation at CBS. The other networks sought for at least a semblance of programming balance.

The most popular cartoon at CBS actually premiered a year earlier; Hanna Barbera's **Space Ghost**. Designed by comics artist Alex Toth, Space Ghost lived in an undetermined future on his own private Ghost Planet with his assistants, twins Jan and Jase. Blip the space monkey added comedy relief. Space Ghost's adversaries ranged from power-mad scientists to bug-eyed monsters, all intent on ruling the universe. Also from Hanna-Barbera came the **Herculoids**, possibly the most bizarre cartoon made for Saturday morning; on the planet Amzot the warrior Zandor, his wife Tara and son Dorno live with Zandor's offbeat allies—Igoo, a giant rock ape, Zok, a dragon who shoots laser beams from his eyes, Gloop and Gleep, two blob creatures who can out-plastic Plastic Man, and Tundro, a rhinoceros who can shoot exploding rocks from his horn. The Herculoids protect Amzot from outer space invaders. Such was the popularity of these shows that, if not for events yet to occur, they may never have been cancelled.

The other shows covered an enormous range: **Shazzan**, an Arabian genie who never laid a hand on his enemies, he merely cast spells upon them(for audience identification two siblings, Chuck and Nancy, travelled with Shazzan, trying to find his original master), **The Mighty Mightor**, a super-powered caveman who battled pre-historic perils (his biggest problem, however, was a six-year old named Little Rock. Little Rock probably qualifies as the first super-hero fan. He had designed for himself a costume resembling Mightor's, and he went out on his own to battle evil, getting into trouble every time. Mightor spent most of his time rescuing him), **The Impossibles**, a rock group who "secretly" fought crime (it wasn't much of a secret, however, since they used their same names in both alter-egos.).

After all this weirdness, however, creativity began to wear thin. **Birdman** appeared, a Hawkman ripoff who, as the season progressed, allied himself with Birdboy and Birdgirl. Another team, **Samson and Goliath** were, in civilian guise, a teenaged boy and his dog. When Samson slapped his wristbands together, the two transformed into a super-powered adult and his lion. **Super President** was a superhero who, technically, had no name. James Norcross had a job far removed from Clark Kent or Peter Parker. He was president of the United States. He had, besides the power to veto bills in Congress, the power to change his molecular structure ala Metamorpho. He fought crime in a typical superhero costume but could not use the "Super President" name for fear of giving away his identity.

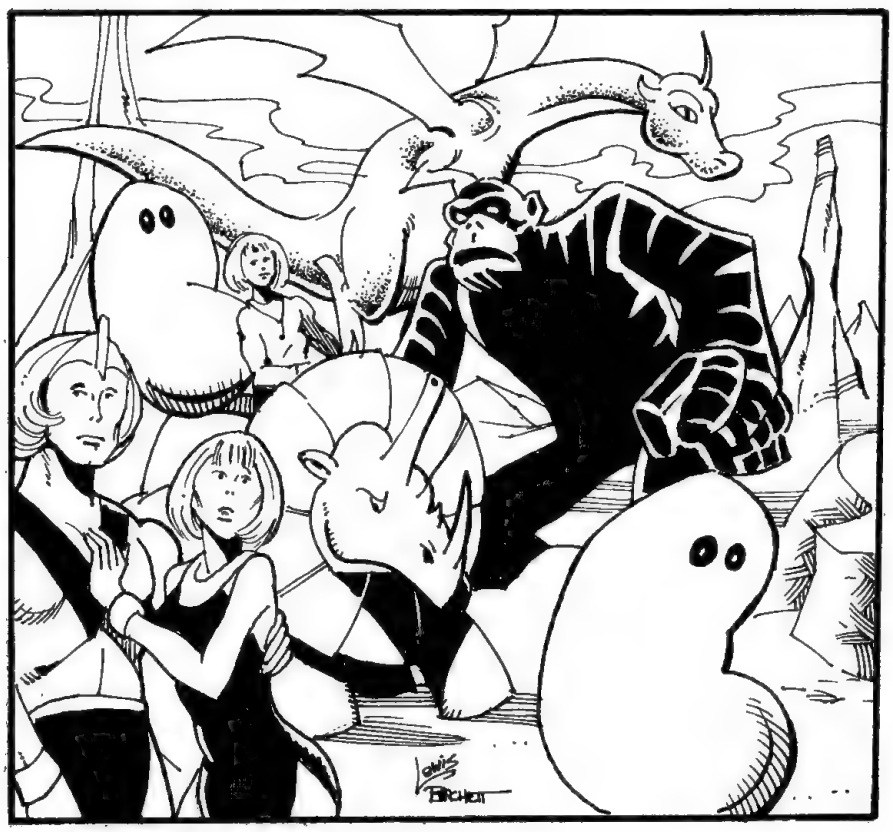
Comic book characters also became well represented on Saturday morning television. CBS had an hour featuring DC Comics' headliners. Superman, of course, starred the show. It also featured the Flash, Aquaman, Green Lantern, the Teen Titans, and the Justice League. ABC presented the adventures of Marvel's **Spiderman**, some episodes of which were directed by Ralph Bakshi. Hanna-Barbera attempted a series of adaptations of **The Fantastic Four** comics, changing storylines whenever for legal reasons, or whenever they felt like it. Kirby's "Galactus Triology" was brought to the screen without mention of Alicia or the Silver Surfer's banishment to Earth. Another story, titled "Duel In the Depths", by Hanna-Barbera, was based on a Fantastic Four comic titled "Side by Side with the Submariner." Subby, however, was being used by Gantray-Lawrence Animation (animators of the syndicated **Marvel Superheroes** series) and was not available to Hanna-Barbera. So Prince Namor of Atlantis became Prince Triton of Pacifica. Oddly enough, the supporting characters, Lady Dorma and Attuma, remained the same at both companies.

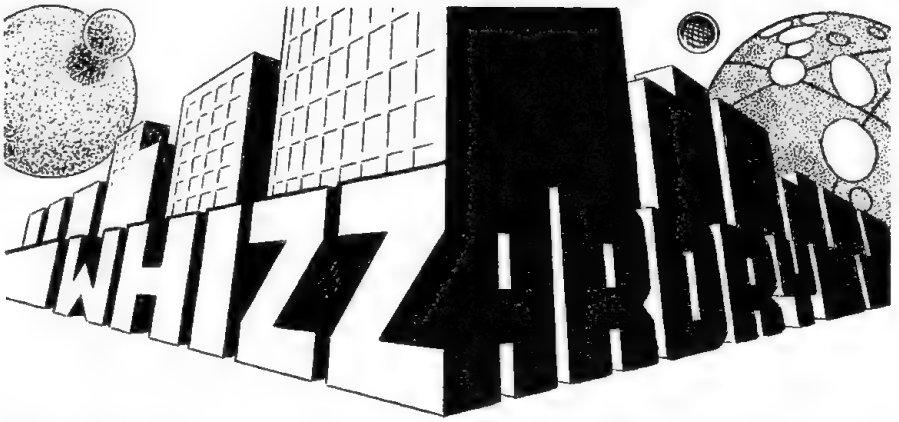
These, along with other animated creations shown as fillers, made for a somewhat crowded schedule. Hanna-Barbera led in numbers of programs on the air, including **Frankenstein, Jr.**, a giant robot teamed with an adolescent scientist, **Moby Dick**, a whale resembling Herman Melville's in name only, **Dino Boy**, a teenager trapped in a prehistoric world he never made, **The Galaxy Trio**, a team of space-spanning superheroes, and **Johnny Quest**, the excellent adventure series which came to Saturdays in repeats of prime time episodes.

Production values of these shows stayed still within the bounds of limited animation, but the plots and scripting were interesting mainly because they were quite different from previous cartoon programs. Some shows also benefited from extremely dramatic background music (**Mightor** and **The Herculoids** in particular) which, while repetitive, was very effective.

Behind the scenes, however, all was not well. The animators themselves, many of them still from the first generation of theatrical cartoonists, felt uncomfortable dealing with superheroes. In effect, they were forced to produce these programs, a network demand particular from CBS. The audience was at an all-time high at the time. Unfortunately, the audience included parents and other groups bent on "improving" children's television. After much hounding, the networks relented, cancelling many of the superhero cartoons, some after only one season. Replacing these shows brought forth the next trend—the rock group cartoons such as **The Archies**, **Banana Splits**, and **Jackson Five**, hailing back to the Beatle's animated adventures.

For years, "superhero" became a dirty word on Saturday mornings. Gradually, programs such as **Shazam** and **Super Friends** brought the characters back in extremely sanitized versions. The 1980-81 season, in a surprising move, is reviving **Space Ghost** and **The Herculoids**, not on CBS, but on NBC, the president of which is none other than Fred Silverman, the man who first brought them to the air. If they catch on, can Mightor and Little Rock be far behind? □





Send all comments to: WHIZZARD, 5730 Chatport Road, St. Louis, MO 63129. Unless otherwise requested, all letters received are subject to print.

INTERVIEWS

Terry Austin
21 Greenleaf St.
Rye, NY 10580

The interviews continue to be my favorite feature--you guys are quite good at this stuff. There were a couple of places in Marshall Rogers' interview, though, where I kept waiting for him to amplify his answers with more detail, but he let me down. So, I'd like to digress awhile and hopefully reveal something of interest along the way.

In response to the question of how we came to do **Detective Comics**, it seems to me upon reflection that Neal Adams is indirectly responsible. At the time Marshall was working for Marvel's British department and he visited Continuity Associates one day to show Neal his artwork. Neal said he thought it was pretty good but could be improved on as a whole if he could find a good inker to work with. He suggested that I might be a logical choice so Marshall came back down the hall to the office I shared with Bob Wiacek, introduced himself, and showed me his work (including his first DC assignment, part one of "A Canterbury Tail").

He said that he was going to be doing a two part "Daughters of the Dragon" job for Marvel and asked if I would like to ink it. "I would be glad to do it," I told him, but unfortunately I had no time. I was already doing some regular strips for DC, including the Calculator series, which was being done by different pencillers.

Persistance being Marshall's middle name, he went up to DC and asked for the Calculator series so that we could have a chance to work together. We did the Green Arrow and Hawkman episodes (with Neal asking me to ink parts of the Hawkman episode and DC refusing to let me add his name to the inking credits. Neal evidently had been out of favor up there at the moment, as he was periodically.) Anyway Mike Grell was slated to step in to pencil and ink the booklength Batman wrap-up story as no newcomers could be trusted with the awesome responsibility of drawing the Batman. When the job came due however, Mike was too busy with the successful **Legion of Super Heroes** and newly reinstated **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** book. So Julie Schwartz and Vinnie Colletta stuck up for Marshall and I and we ended up with the assignment over the violent objections of others in the office.

When that job was over, we were off the book and moved on to finishing the "Canterbury Tail" jobs and the "Man Bat" strip. **Dectective** went to Walt Simonson and I remember being kind of disappointed as not being asked to ink it but figured, "Oh well, I'm still too new to do an important feature."

Then, one day I was in Paul Levitz's office and he says to me casually, "By the way, a whole bunch of people with obvious poor taste wrote in to say that they liked Marshall and your Batman job. Jeanette liked it a lot too. So you guys are the new art team on the book." I remember running at full tilt through Rockefeller Center back to Continuity, grabbing a phone and frantically dialing Marshall's number. "Hey buddy, guess what?" I know it's a long story but it's a pretty important one for Marshall and I. Those were mighty heady days for a couple of new guys playing in the big leagues.

I found it funny that you should ask Marshall about the Joker's victim from the copyright bureau looking like Julie Schwartz, mainly because I remember asking him the same thing when I saw the pencils on that job. I was probably helped to that mistaken conclusion by Marshall portraying himself as the Joker's next victim (killed by the cat in the second Joker story.) I've always felt that it would have been neat if Marshall, Steve and I had been the three victims. Although come to think of it, Marshall and I didn't meet Steve until long after the series was over. (We were working from completed scripts Steve had written months ago before leaving for Europe to write a novel. One of the best memories of working on that series was receiving a letter from Steve in Spain thanking me for putting so much into a series he so obviously had a lot of love for.) The "Manbat" job Marshall mentions is in **Batman Family** 12. On page 10, panel 3 you'll find the genuine Julie Schwartz at the left (and Marshall, Mike Nasser and I bopping through that and the next two panels in a scene that Marshall remembered from DC's lobby a few days earlier.)

As for the Spirit poster you mentioned, that was something that I stuck in, although I believe Marshall had a Denny Colt tombstone in a scene a few issues later. Sometimes Marshall would purposely leave a nice blank space and tell me to go ahead and put something funny in it, like the billboard in the Deadshot issue with good ol' corrupt Rupert Thorne asking the citizens to please "Help keep Gotham City clean."

I probably wouldn't bother with all these details but those jobs meant a lot to me. It still seems rather like a comedy of errors which brought the three of us together on that assignment. We duked it out more than a few times, sometimes with the company and sometimes between ourselves. We still had fun and it remains one of my favorite series due in large part to the extraordinary contributions of Steve and Marshall.

Bryan Hollerbach
Route 2, Box 143
Ste. Genevieve, MO 63670

I thoroughly enjoyed the dialog with Craig Russell. **Whizzard** almost invariably boasts excellent interviews.

Craig's comments regarding Marvel added detail to observations Howard Chaykin and Jim Starlin made in previous issues. The company's dislike of words--as shown in their resistance to Don McGregor and Steve Gerber's experiments--frightens me; so, too, does the staffers' reaction to the romance between Carmilla and M'Shulla.

Whatever happened to Stan Lee's idealistic vision of comics as literature?

I do believe M. Russell erred--if only through partiality--in describing **Amazing Adventures** as Marvel's only "prestige book." At the time "War of the Worlds" was running, Marvel was publishing two other magazines wherein both verbal and visual elements crackled with artistic electricity. Of course, I refer to Doug moench and Paul Gulacy's **Master of Kung Fu** and Starlin's morbid **Warlock** series. (As a matter of fact, since both Steve Englehart and Steve Gerber were still blazing trails during that period, it may represent the last comics renaissance of the '70s.)

The resistance to change of which Don McGregor spoke in "The Only Way to Survive" disturbs me, as did the tyrannical editorial vagaries he described. Don't Marvel hierarchs know that without experimentalism comes stagnation? Then again, comics have long shown a preference for violence over mature sexuality--or, for that matter, immature sexuality. It seems completely appropriate that the company's bigwigs would worry about audience response to an interracial romance in a book whose Martian antagonists consider human flesh **la piece de resistance**. Stan's comment (or at least Don's paraphrase thereof) exemplifies Marvel's spurious liberalism: "You're really right, but could you make her green?"

That Don McGregor has moved on to other projects gladdens me. His work deserves better treatment than the automatons at Marvel gave it.

"Stewart and the Rat Race" made me mad. The entire Steve Gerber interview seemed patently hostile, and many of Kenn's questions struck me as downright snide: on page 29 he asked, "Will Stewart act as a surrogate Howard?" **Of course** he will; **everyone knows** that Steve writes the **same stuff** over and over again--that his vision of Stephen Strange (in **The Defenders**) could have **easily** exchanged word balloons with Gerber's version of Daimon Hellstrom (in **Marvel Spotlight**). Then, on page 30, Kenn queried, "Would one of the things you attack in **Stewart the Rat** be the way Marvel is currently handling **Howard**?" **Naturally** it would! After all, when Steve went to DC to pen those three issues of **Mister Miracle**, didn't he **immediately**

send Scott Free into combat with simulacra of Stan Lee and Jim Shooter? (By the way, didn't his version of the Super-Escape Artist sound one hell of a lot like Howard?)

Just what the hell was Kenn trying to prove? Correct me if I err: the questions I've just quoted ascribed Steve vengeful petulance and an absence of talent. Further, the logotype illustration graphically depicted Kenn's major thesis--i.e., Steve's creation of Stewart stands as a clear-cut case of conceptual duplication, because the rat represents the duck in a different hat. **Come on**, people! Give Gerber credit for more talent than **that**. After all, who created the duck in the first place?

Fittingly, the final insult appeared at the end of the interview: "Opinions expressed in **Whizzard** interviews are those of the subjects concerned and do not necessarily reflect the views of the magazine." (Translate that as: "Although this guy slandered virtually everyone in the world, don't blame us--he forced us to print his opinions")...In **Whizzard** 8, the late Graves Gladney averred Jim Steranko had no talent, insinuated James Bama painted poorly, described Picasso as "a buffoon," and called Henry Steeger "a no good sunnuva bitch." Why didn't you conclude **that** interview thus? If such blurbs must appear in **Whizzard**, put them up front so that they apply to **every** interview.

Basically, Marty, you've done almost exactly what Marvel does: you've treated the writers as second-class citizens. Compare the length of the pieces: you allotted the Russell interview five pages, and the Rogers interview six; to coverage of Conrad (who's thus far evinced virtually no talent) you allotted four pages. By comparison, the farcical Gerber interview got only three pages, and the dialog with McGregor got a measely two. By discussing Steve and Don's other works, you could have easily lengthened both interviews.

Further, indices to the artists' works accompanied their interviews. Why don't you include such features with the writers? I'd love to learn which of Don and Steve's stories I lack.

• The blurb in **Whizzard** 13 was misplaced, but that was a case of poor layout rather than an intentional insult.

Whizzard interviews have been primarily with artists rather than writers because generally there is more innovation and greater fan interest in the area of comic art than comic writing. Over 85% of requested interviews from **Whizzard** 12 questionwere for comic illustrators.

ARTWORK

Bryan Hollerbach ..... Sadly, this issue's graphics disappointed me. Only Russell and Rogers' illustrations stood out. Bill and Rick's front cover lacked polish and detail, while Jim Bourgeois' back cover lacked proper focus and dynamic placement of elements. Ron Ward lifted his contribution directly from the third panel of the fourth page of **Detective Comics** 476. Guard against the works of fan artists who "create" with the aid of tracing paper. Of the remaining illustrations, only the following caught my eye: Alan Hunter's strange lady; Steve Skeates' very strange lady; and Ed.Mantels-Seeker's portrait of Gamora.

Finally, Marty, never use monochroic covers; this issue's tanned complexion lent it a decidely inappropriate juvenile appearance. Go for the rainbow--or rely solely on black, white, and grey.

"Musclebound for Glory" elicited many smiles. Bill's tongue-in-cheek humor appeals to me. From the visual standpoint, the series still needs more space; the four-page format necessitates excessive compression of the layouts. Give Bill and the Kid two extra pages!

Ed.Mantels-Seeker, 4038 Bamberger,/St. Louis, MO 63116 Question: What do Lassie, the Imperial Walkers from the **Star Wars** sequel, and the Martian tripod on the cover of **Whizzard** 13 all have in common? Answer: Four legs. In the case of Lassie and the Imperial Walkers I can accept that, but...a Martian **tripod**?

Not counting the Atomic Kid and the lettering there was twice as much pro as fan art in the issue. With the exception of the Russell drawings, most of the professional work didn't merit the space. I hope that in the future more restraint will be shown in the selection and inclusion of illustrations--fan and pro alike--in the magazine.

By the way Marty, you're gonna have to try to catch some shuteye before or after you type up some of the articles for **Whizzard**. The three paragraph typo on page 31 looks like you dozed off while you were doing it.

ARTICLES

Mike Phillips 222 Falls Ck. Tornado, WV 25202 I wanted to write and congratulate you on another fine issue of **Whizzard**.

The Steve Ditko article was very informative. I have always enjoyed Ditko's work because of his individualism and originality. I am now planning to find back issues of the comics Kenn Thomas mentioned that showcased his most recent work.

I guess that your fanzine is one of the few left that can be really called a fanzine. I hope that you continue with it and you can bet I will be waiting for 14.

Hollerbach ..... Generally speaking, "Rogers' Batman Revisited," the complement to the interview with Marshall, overshadowed almost every article you've published in the past five issues; Mr. Morrissey's piece seemed relatively catholic and highly literate. In places, Rich's article even managed to startle me--as when he pointed out that Steve had Hugo Strange disguised as Stephen Strange. Anyone with any intelligence whatsoever would have caught that. (On the other hand, I can't recall the script ever referring to Hugo as "Doctor.") His report on the corporate machinations which spawned the "DC Implosion" also attracted my attention. It saddens me to think that the excellent **Detective Comics** should have sold so poorly while pap like **Batman Family** prospered.

Bill Lewis' "Cartooniverse" contained much truth. Unfortunately, if the pulse of the overground comics industry has grown sluggish, that of Saturday morning's animated cavalcade has stopped.

That certain concerned citizens' groups should foist such foolish restrictions on animators strikes me as exceedingly silly. After all, what does Junior do everyday when Dad returns from work? Why, Junior naturally rushes to collect the funnies--wherein Steve Canyon often indulges in horrific pugilistic impulses and those shocking young reactionaries in "Doonesbury" harry hard-working statesmen. (You'll notice that I whispered that last passage. had I spoke any louder, the PTA might have heard me—and I'd hate to see Milton Caniff and Gary Trudeau forced to produce cow cuck...or weren't you aware that coprophiles abound in the PTA?)

In any event, sleep in, people; sleep in.

Gene Phillips 10222 Kickhill Houston, TX 77089 I am tired of hearing the cliche about how illogical it is that "Killraven prefers to fight with a metal sword" in a world of technology, like that famous protest against John Carter's Mars using both swords and rayguns. True, in neither series was the writer giving the contrast much thought beyond the visual appeal of archaic weapons, but there is a half-buried rationale. In Mars' case, the culture of Mars is in decline from an era of scientific complexity, and, Killraven's world is one of a devastated Earth-culture. In debunking the use of swords alongside guns, you overlook one salient fact: guns need

ammunition--as would ionic blades and photonuclear annihilators. In a devastated world, ammunition is not easy to come by, but a blade is always good for killing. Burroughs' Mars is less defensible, for it is never explained why Mars has declined, or why a once-scientific people reverted so easily to a feudal pattern--but "War of the Worlds" presents us with a devestated future-Earth, ruled by masters who surely guard everything but a few castoffs. Same thing for vehicles: horses feed naturally, vehicles require fuel.

....The primary fault of your critique is that you emphasize rational inconsistencies far too much, since Killraven's greatest strength is in its poetry. Rational consistency of concepts is only minutely important in Killraven; your mistake is in judging it as you would judge an inferior imitation of Wells' **War of the Worlds**--and by imitation, I mean a meticulous clone. There may indeed by justificaiton for doubting that Emmanuel could produce offspring from human women, but as long as it is remotely possible, Mcgregor is justifed in doing it--not to play with the rationalistic science-aspect of how-this-could-be-done; but to invoke the poetry-based intensity of how-people-react-to-it. (An interesting writer could easily make hash of it by omitting the poetry of the concept, which is exactly what happened in early science-fiction BEM stories.) Still, at least you gave McGregor credit for "effective scripts" that struck "emotional chords," which is a vast understatement but nice to hear, anyway.

normal zine. I also did not advertise that it had a two-color cover or a 13-page comic story inside, two more benefits.

He states that the professional art included "hurried and fan-inked convention sketches, and reprinted art," and my own.

To find some examples of hurried art look at any piece of pro art; I'm sure Grell's "hurried convention sketch" took him at least five hours, if not longer.

I can't see how Jerry can call the Brunner back-cover a "hurried sketch."

POTPOURRI

Mitch O'Connell
5453 N. Lakewood
Chicago, IL 60690

I'd like to comment about Jerry Durrwachter's review of my fanzine **Lollapaloosa** step by step.

To start with he says that buyers from my ads would be disappointed because they were expecting it to be 8.5 x 11 inches instead of 7 x 10 inches. Since most fanzines are digest size they were probably favorably surprised to find a larger than

Out of the 45 illustrations, excluding the 18 pages of comic stories, three drawings are reprinted from **Comic Reader** covers and one interior illo from a **Comics Journal** because I felt they were good examples of the artists' work. None of them took up more than ¼ of a page each.

I don't know what is wrong with a "fan inked" drawing. There are some excellent fan artists around and I think the two pro pieces inked by fans were well done. I did not include my art under the "26 comic artists"; I only listed pro artists.

He says my art is "poor". I can't argue about his own likes and dislikes but he is in the minority concerning my art. Regarding my art in **Lollapaloosa**, Bob Kane called it "very fine illustrating." **RBCC** said, "Mitch O'Connell is a superior fan artist." I'm not picking the best quotes. **The Comics Journal** thinks enough of my art to feature it regularly. **The Comics Reader** has printed my art on two of their covers. I'd had art in 40 issues of **The Buyers' Guide** including three covers. Yours was the first negative review of **Lollapaloosa**.

Jerry complains my checklists are largely swiped from **Whizzard**. Out of the six checklists I only used your Starlin index to check my own. If there is another source available--shouldn't I use it? I want to give my readers the best possible indexes anywhere. Believe me, I didn't make these indexes by sitting around copying others' work. I spent weeks going through my

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whizzard

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"An extremely well-done comix fanzine." --SF Review

"WHIZZARD contains some of the most intelligent and in-depth fan writing there is." -Inbetweena

"This is one of the best comics fanzines around for the money...It's sincere, homey, well-produced... fine, fine stuff." -Comics Feature

friends' collections. I spent three days going through nearly every comic at Mile High Comics in Boulder. I went to department stores all over Maine, Chicago, and Denver looking for Neal Adams' reprinted work on toys and games. I went through every ad in the last three years of **The Buyers' Guide** calling people who listed rare publications containing pro artists work. I took making these listings very seriously, and I believe one will not find better indexes anywhere.

Jerry seems to be determined to find everything he can wrong with **Lollapaloosa**, not noticing what he doesn't want to. What is worse, he can't give any constructive criticism; he just tears it up without giving any ideas for improvement. It was a very shallow one-sided review.

• Although Kenn Thomas wrote the **Lollapaloosa** review, it contained many opinions from the original draft by Jerry Durrwachter. Jerry's reply follows:

I don't know where Mitch gets his statistical information, but if "most" fanzines are digest size, then my collection of 200 issues must not be a representative one. Of these, 95% are 8½ x 11. The remaining 5% contains publications larger as well as smaller than 8½ x 11. Just for the record, though, Steven R. Johnson's ("The Bag Man") "fanzine" sized bags are designed to fit 8½ x 11 editions. The two-color **front** cover of **Lollapaloosa** 3 utilized color in its lettering only. I'm not sure whether I would call his 13-page story a "benefit."

Perhaps there were "just" four illustrations reprinted from **TCR** and **TCJ** (I don't see how the size they were reprinted matters), but out of the 26 comic artists advertised, at least 11 were **only** represented by reprinted work. O'Connell's ad for this issue said nothing about **any** of the work being reprint material. The Brunner piece **is** sharp, but there is little other first run pro work in the book of any merit.

Unlike Kenn, I agree completely with **RBCC** in regards to O'Connell being a superior fan artist. He does some very fine spot illustrations. What I don't care for is his strip work. At this point in his career, Mitch O'Connell's storytelling ability is very questionable. Also very much in question are O'Connell's ethics. The ad for **Lollapaloosa** 3 and the cover of the issue both make mention of a "never before published Batman comic book story." Yet inside the issue O'Connell admits that "the story in this magazine is not prepared by or for DC Comics, Inc., and they have no responsibility for its contents." How a story with this type of disclaimer attached to it can justifiably be called a "comic book" story is beyond me. Neither the ad nor the cover divulge the fact that this "unpublished" Batman extravaganza is solely a Mitch O'Connell effort.

A quick cross reference of the Starlin checklists in **Whizzard** 12 and **Lollapaloosa** 3 reveal that Mitch did quite a bit more than "check" my checklists against his own. Even the typos are regenerated in their entirity. If O'Connell would think back, I believe he would recall that the source of such additions to his Chaykin checklist as Howard's work for men's magazines and DC's romance comics was also from an issue of **Whizzard**. As far as his other checklists go, the only thing he adds to the ones seen in the various prozines is that he states that reprinted cover art by the artist can be found in

Overstreet's Price Guide, **The Comic Reader**, etc. O'Connell should have spent more time verifying information printed in his checklists (there is no such animal as **Weird Worlds** 12, for example) and also should have given more detailed descriptions of the items listed. Of course, not doing the first makes the second impossible.

My best suggestion is that O'Connell find someone else to edit his magazine and his ads publicizing it. Even the most highly creative people concede the benefits of having another to oversee their work. Deceptive advertising, whether intentional or unintentional, should never be used to promote any product.

Eugene Caldwell
P.O. Box 92893
Milwaukee, Wi

Lissen you schmucks—you better lay off Bill or I'll put a whammy on your production. Expect a visit from inspector Lee next time you bias poor Bill. He's trying extra hard to pull it together and he needs Steve Martin, Al Franken and the entire cast of **The Rocky Horror Picture Show** to do it; so, give 'im some credit!

You don't attack a blurb for a book (or the author). You get at the meat, which is **AFTA**, after all...

That's just sloppy sophomoric writing on Kenn's part pretending to be an objective review. It's a waste of space, and of Marcinko's time to even reply to it.

• For the record, **Inbetweena** 5 was devoted entirely to a rebuttal of the **Inbetweena** 4 review in **Whizzard** 13. Kenn terms the rebuttal "as superficial as anything else Marcinko has produced. It's social masturbation, not comics fan work."

Bryan Hollerbach
.....

Much to my surprise, a mellow mood permeated "Whizzardry." This please me; I prefer thoughtful missives--Rich Morrissey's, for instance, or Walt Jascheck's--to saccharine plaudits or venomous criticisms.

Again much to my surprise, the critique from "Thor" in **Whizzard** 12 prompted few comments. Frankly, his letter amused me greatly; the man had obviously labored to make hypocrisy a fine art: in one breath he said that fannish fan magazines' "existence needn't bother you, unless you want to be bothered. Or need something/somebody to sneer at and say 'I'm better than the, look at how dumb **they** are.'" Intriguingly, in the next breath he suggested you "go back to comics fandom where pompous, know-nothing assholes are appreciated and venerated." That "Thor" chose to air such noble criticisms pseudonymously astounded me.

We come to the first last: "Small Talk," wherein that Klug person let his hair down. First, felicitations on the NMI contract! **Whizzard** warrants a larger distribution area. Just wait 'til Time, Inc. offers to subsidize WEG Enterprises.

I must also congratulate you on choosing to adopt Rich Morrissey's suggestion re older professionals--and on deciding to include comic strip creators under **Whizzard**'s coverage.

Regarding the general lack of respect for comics: don't fret. Some people suffer so from conceit that they scorn everything but the mirror. Such people thus display their own vast personal insecurity. Numismatics doesn't impress me in the least, but I certainly don't travel the land preaching its "evils", because I realize that beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder. (Incidentally, your radio interviewer's research obviously hadn't been extended to the Sunday comics section—where she'd have discovered "Steve Canyon," the finest dramatic strip extant.) So when next someone sneers, "You collect **that stuff**?" just remember last issue's guest critique from "Thor," the clod of thunder—and smile and smile.

Terry Austin
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Two minor additions for those checklist completist buffs: on Craig's list, let it be known that the first seven pages of art in **Amazing Adventures** 37 had backgrounds by yours truly; and absent from Rogers' list is the plate he inked that was pencilled by me in my **Heroines** portfolio. Also, some fan gave me copies of some of the stuff Marshall did for mens' magazines: from **Cheri** 1 a color self-portrait, a 4 page color strip called "Dick & Diane in Modern Romances," and a color illo for "No Names Please," and from **High Society** 2 five black and white illos for "Isaac Asimov's Lecherous Limmericks," and a two page color illo for "The Snuff Parlor."

As for your nifty lil' magazine, it continues to please. I was trying to describe it to someone in the industry the other day and wound up saying, "Well, gee, it's kinda like a nice version of the **Comics Journal**--like what would result if those guys (at the **Journal**) actually liked comics and gave up being prententious." The logo designs this issue were excellent, by the by. My one complaint is that the artwork used with the interviews should have had a line underneath telling where it came from.

And, oh yes, could you puh-lease send me another copy of **Whizzard**. I made the mistake of taking my copy up to Marvel's offices. I've traced it through the hands of Roger Stern, Jim Salicrup, Ralph Machino and then—oblivion (no oblivion is not the name of Stan's secretary). □